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New Statesman

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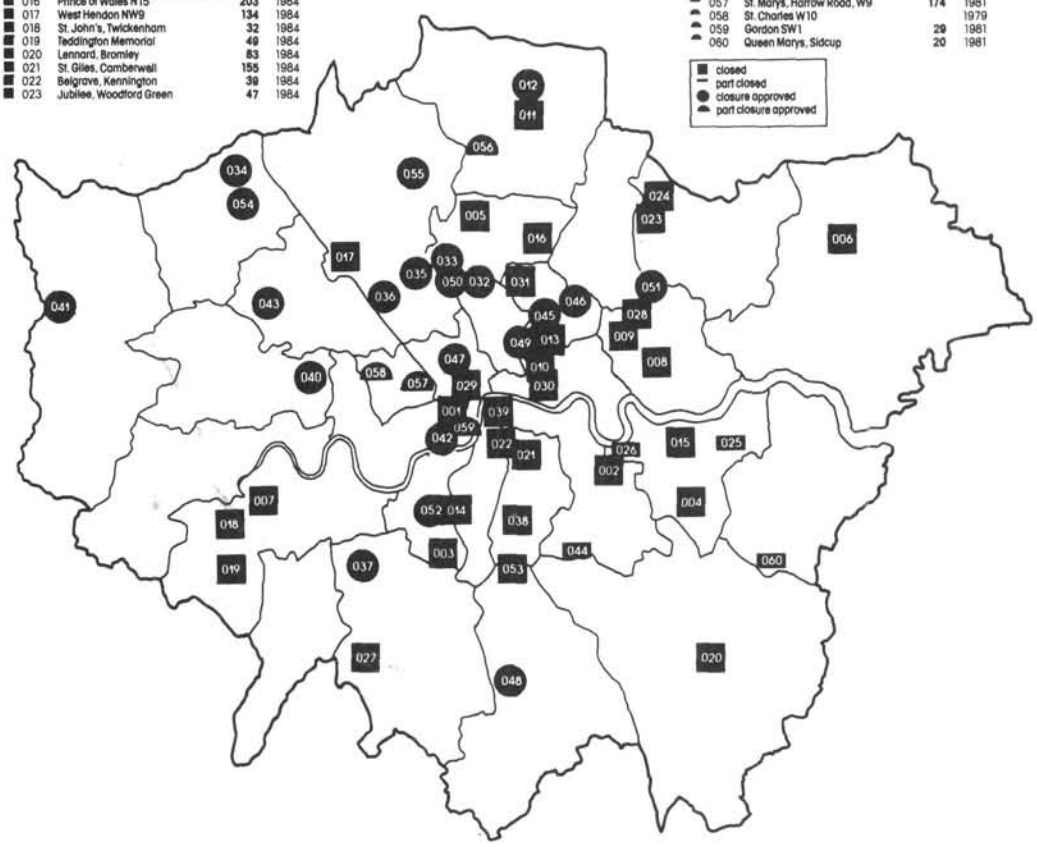
LONDON'S HEALTH SERVICE IN DECLINE

London Hospital Closures since 1979

No	Hospital – Location	Beds	Date
001	St. George's Hyde Park Corner	268	1980
002	St. Johns, Morden Hill	38	1980
003	St. Benedict's, SW17	213	1980
004	Eltham & Mottingham, Eltham	47	1980
005	Wood Green & Southgate, N11	45	1982
006	Victoria, Romford	44	1982
007	Royal, Richmond	(Day)	1983
008	St. Mary's E13	70	1983
009	Queen Mary's E15	112	1983
010	Mildmay Mission E2	62	1983
011	Cheshunt Cottage, Cheshunt	14	1982
012	Enfield War Memorial	44	1982
013	St. Leonard's N1	119	1984
014	South London, Clapham	180	1984
015	British H. For Mothers & Babies SE18	55	1984
016	Prince of Wales N15	203	1984
017	West Hendon NW9	134	1984
018	St. John's, Twickenham	32	1984
019	Teddington Memorial	49	1984
020	Lennard, Bromley	83	1984
021	St. Giles, Camberwell	155	1984
022	Belgrave, Kennington	39	1984
023	Jubilee, Woodford Green	47	1984
024	Hart, Woodford Green	78	1984
025	St. Nicholas SE18	74	1985
026	Dreadnought SE10	20	1985
027	Cheam, North Cheam	68	1985
028	Newham Maternity E7	108	1985
029	Royal Dental WC2	(Day)	1985
030	London Jewish E1	128	1980
031	Bearsted Memorial N16	24	1981
032	City of London Maternity N4	104	1982
033	Whittington Home N6	26	1982
034	Stanmore Cottage, Stanmore	14	1979
035	St. Columbas NW3	28	1980
036	Temple Hill House NW3	18	1981
037	Wimbledon SW20	67	1981
038	Holmhurst, Herne Hill SE24	22	1980
039	Royal Eye SE1	(OP)	1980
040	Leamington Park W3	96	1983
041	Uxbridge & District, Uxbridge	24	1983
042	Vincent Square (Day) SW1	(Day)	1983
043	Wembley, Wembley	134	1983
044	Sydenham Children's SE26	87	1984
045	German, E8	172	1983
046	The Mothers, E5	104	1983
047	Royal National Orthopaedic, W1	88	1983
048	Waddon, Purley Way	106	1983
049	St. Matthews N1	205	1983
050	Thomas Barlow Home, N6	24	1980
051	Aldersbrook Unit, E11	55	1981
052	Queen Elizabeth House, SW12	32	1980
053	Norwood & District, SE19	34	1984
054	Orme Lodge, Stanmore	22	1979
055	St. Elizabeth's, N12	40	1979
056	Highlands N21	80	1982
057	St. Marys, Harrow Road, W9	174	1981
058	St. Charles W10		1979
059	Gordon SW1	29	1981
060	Queen Marys, Sidcup	20	1981



31 of London's hospitals have been closed in the last six years. 3 have been partially closed. A further 21 of London's hospitals have been approved for closure and 5 approved for part closure since 1979.

Nearly all Londoners have suffered real cuts in health service resources over the last three years. Next year they will also lose the Greater London Council which undertakes research on a wide range of vital health matters.

For more information or further copies of this poster contact the GLC's Hotline, Tel. 633 4400
London Health Emergency at 335 Gray's Inn Road, Tel. 833 3020
or the GLC's Health Panel, Room 506, County Hall, Tel. 633 8455

GLC
Caring for London's Health

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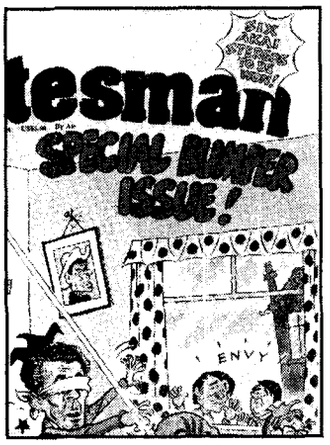
New Statesman



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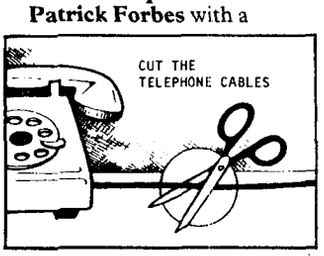

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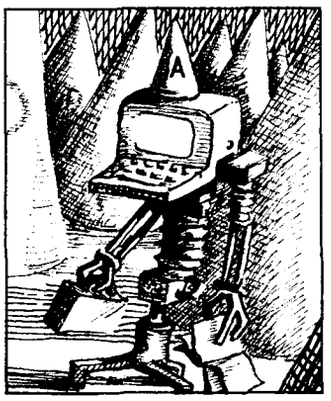

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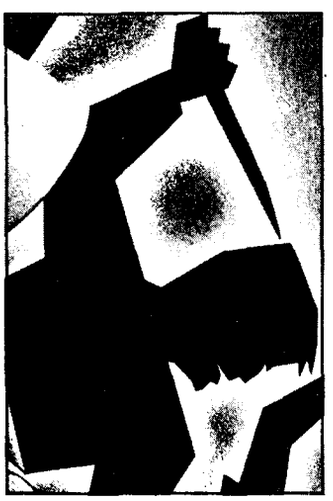

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New Statesman Vol 110 Nos 2856/2857 20/27 December 1985

Fowler's Christmas gift to the poor

EVEN IN THE best of circumstances, it is hard to construct a just and humane system of social security. Under Labour and Conservative governments alike, social security provision is expected to fill the cracks left by the labour market. Only when there is an overwhelming *political* commitment to full employment, as there was in the 1940s transition from war to peace, are those cracks relatively thin.

In times like ours, when the labour market offers profoundly unequal access to jobs and incomes, and when what fits the labour market — lots of low-paid, part-time workers — is profoundly at odds with what fits the welfare state — well-paid male workers with women at home to look after the young, the disabled, the elderly — the cracks yawn so wide that social security provision can only paper over them.

That in itself makes this goverment's claim that it is doing something radical to help the poor untenable. If that *were* the governmental priority, the initiative would be coming from the economic departments, and would involve large-scale intervention in the economy. There is no hint in the 54 self-righteous pages of this week's White Paper on the Reform of Social Security that the workings of the economy have any connection whatsoever with the inexorable spread of poverty in Britain.

What we have been offered is a half-digested collection of reforms which aim to satisfy conflicting aims. The claim that they are held together by the single purpose of relieving the poorest in society is wholly unconvincing. The White Paper correctly identifies households with children as the poorest. It argues that its reforms of income support and the social fund (which replace supplementary benefit and statutory entitlements) and the family credit scheme (which replace the under-used family income supplement) are designed to shift resources to people with children. It is true that they shift resources from the old, the single, and the under-25 poor. But if assisting parents were the DHSS's clear and simple aim, there is a clear and simple answer: to increase child benefit. As this is a universal benefit, that would be a large increase in cash paid out. Much could be recouped by taxing it back from the better off and abolishing the anachronistic married man's tax allowance.

The White Paper acknowledges this argument. It rejects it on the grounds that 'many salary and wage earners would experience a sharp drop in their take home pay'. As the benefit is paid to mothers, the only people whose income would drop overall is that of male earners. It is clearly politically more expedient for the government to enforce a reduction in income on the old, the young, the childless living in poverty than on male earners who might otherwise demand salary increases from their employers, or resent their loss of authority of the father of the household.

THE READINESS of the DHSS to let itself, and the whole system of social security, be used to subsidise a low-wage economy is also apparent. The clear purpose of the family credit scheme is to boost the spread of the low wage economy. Whether this is for the benefit of employers, or the moral improvement of the workers — the scheme 'will significantly improve incentives to work' claims the White Paper — is not of course stated. For its declared intention is to reduce poverty. It will in fact increase poverty. Fowler admits that the number of those who are affected by high marginal tax rates will, under the family credit scheme, 'tend to increase'. This is a mealy mouthed way of putting it. The Institute of Fiscal Studies calculates that the proportion of the tax-paying population which would pay marginal tax rates of between 60 and 100 per cent (ie who would lose between 60 and 100 per cent of increased income in tax) would increase from 1.74 per cent to 5.72 per cent.

It is in any case an unpalatable scheme because the benefit will be paid out by the employer through the wage packet. State administrative costs are thus passed on to employers, who will not find it difficult to deduce the personal circumstance of any of their employees claiming the benefit. In two-parent households where the man has a job, the scheme also encourages another shift away from paying benefit to the woman for child and household expenses. Acknowledging the objection, the White Paper states sententiously 'we do not accept the proposition that, uniquely among the people of this country, those in full-time work on low earnings cannot be trusted to allocate their other resources responsibly within the family . . .' Irresponsible 'allocation of resources' is not unique to low-paid men. It is common throughout society. That is no reason for the State not to try to make it more equitable — 'target the poorest' — where it can.

A third principle which has nothing to do with 'targetting the poor' comes into force in the decision to make everyone pay at least 20 per cent of their rates. There is no pretence here that this is anything to do with poverty. The White Paper baldly asserts that this change is in order 'to improve local accountability', because too few people have 'a financial interest in the current level of rates charged.' This is merely rate-capping through the income of the poorest people and has no place in a scheme designed to help the poor.

However, the reform which claimants are likely to find the most punitive is the proposal for a social fund. This does go to the heart of what is wrong with social security; but it makes it worse. Basic income from social security is set at a survival level. Any need over and above that — for heating, or special diet, or to buy essential household goods and furniture — is separately and individually assessed. Such needs have increased as long-term poverty has taken hold. Fowler plans to return to a system of discretionary payments, made out of a set local budget, on the say-so of individual DHSS officers against whom there is no right of appeal.

The social fund gives individual DHSS officers a wholly unacceptable power to discriminate between the 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor. The antagonism, resentment and stress the officers will be embroiled in will damage further the workings of DHSS offices, will intensify local differences, and will give official licence to those officers who enjoy being small-minded bullies.

Finally, the much vaunted overhaul of the pension scheme is a damp squib. There has been no change in the principle of SERPS (which might have been justified on egalitarian grounds); Fowler has just tinkered with the amounts of money in order to yield a supposed £13 billion saving in 50 years' time. This is actuarial silliness. If the change does have any purpose it is to affect the present by increasing the savings of the better off through personal and company pension plans — and thus in theory channel more investment capital into the economy. Britain has learned in the last ten years that the hope that pension funds can, by imaginative, directed investment, resuscitate the British economy, is founded on thin air. □

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£3m OF BRITISH AID TO BANGLADESH REMAINS UNSPENT

Camera Press

Not known for its generosity, the British government *would* help Bangladeshi tea workers (above) — if only the money were accepted

A BRITISH AID project to help poverty-stricken tea estate workers in Bangladesh has fallen flat on its face. Out of £4 million allocated to the scheme six years ago only £1.2 million has so far been spent, mainly on housing improvements, on British owned tea estates, it emerged this week. JOHN TANNER reports

TEA WORKERS in Bangladesh, one of the world's poorest countries and the second largest recipient of UK overseas aid this year, are paid a basic daily wage of only taka 13.50 or about 31p. Living conditions on the estates in Sylhet province are some of the worst for tea workers anywhere.

There are persistent reports of malnutrition and disease and the Overseas Development Administration (ODA) is concerned at the slow draw of the project money. Aid Minister, Timothy Raison, who this week (Tuesday) defended the government's aid record in a Commons debate, is understood to have 'banged the table' over the issue in Bangladesh earlier this year.

The welfare scheme is part of a larger £22 million aid allocation originally made back in 1979 to rehabilitate Bangladeshi estates, which have been starved of investment and produce a low quality tea used as a 'filler' in the trade. Including the £1.2 million mostly spent in 1985 on welfare, only £3 million in total has been spent from the tea project allocation.

British government sources blame Bangladeshi bureaucracy and 'the failure of locally-owned estates in Bangladesh to come up with suitable development plans' before aid can be dispensed.

British firms benefit

The main beneficiaries of the controversial project are two British companies. They are James Finlay, the biggest tea producer in Bangladesh, and Duncan McNeil — a subsidiary of Inchcape who also grow tea in Bangladesh and are consultants to the ODA for the tea rehabilitation project.

'The foreign devil syndrome is always alive and well in Bangladesh' commented a leading director of one major British company growing tea in Bangladesh. 'We don't need Mr Inchcape to tell us how to grow our tea' he told the *New Statesman*.

Last year Inchcape increased its world-wide pre-tax profits by nearly half to £78.9 million and Finlay's, the Glasgow based firm who also manufacture Paynes sweets, made profits of well over £6 million from its Bangladesh estates.

The rehabilitation project seems to have been ill-conceived from the beginning. 'It has been cheaper for estate owners to borrow commercially and buy Indian equipment than borrow from the Dacca government and import machinery from Britain', said one source. The worst managed, often locally-owned estates with the poorest housing and sanitation conditions have received the least money.

The whole tea rehabilitation project is now in the melting pot. The British government wants to retain only the section for health and welfare when phase 3 of the scheme is due to start next July. But there is no sign that General Ershad's military regime will speed up its procedures. Nobody at the Bangladesh High Commission was available for comment. ●

Scots Labour Party says no to Dounreay plans

LABOUR's Scottish executive committee has come out strongly against the plan to build a European plutonium fuel reprocessing plant at Dounreay on the north coast of Scotland. The decision, taken last weekend, is likely to put pressure on the National Executive Committee at last to discuss and come to a view on the controversial proposal.

The Scottish executive overwhelmingly passed a motion moved by Rhona Brankin, a women's delegate from Ross, Cromarty and Skye constituency party, expressing its 'outright opposition' to the Dounreay plan. The executive had previously called for a wide-ranging joint planning inquiry commission into the development, but this was rejected by the Scottish Secretary, George Younger.

Labour's decision came immediately after the Dounreay inquiry reporter (equivalent to an inspector in England and Wales), Alexander Bell, decided at a special preliminary procedural meeting in Thurso, Caithness, last week to postpone the start of the local planning inquiry from 17 February to 7 April next year. He sympathised with objectors' persistent protests about the refusal of the developers, the UK Atomic Energy Authority and British Nuclear Fuels plc, to provide relevant information about their plans.

A list compiled by the inquiry secretariat for the meeting shows that about 630 groups have objected to the proposal, including 15 local authorities, 63 anti-nuclear and environmental groups, the Highlands and Islands Fishermen's Association, the Farmers' Union of Scotland, the Fire Brigades Union and the Scottish National Party. Six organisations from abroad and 40 individuals from Norway are also on the list, as well as a host of organisations from Orkney and Shetland ranging from fishing industry organisations, to church groups, to the Orkney West Mainland Goat Society.

'Mickey Mouse' supporters

Over 760 'supporters' of the proposal are listed, virtually all appearing to be individuals with addresses in Thurso or nearby — presumably mostly members of Dounreay's existing 2,300 staff. The majority of them are signatures on a standard duplicated letter, at least two of which have been exposed as forgeries by the locally-based Nuclear Reprocessing Concern Group. Strangely, 78 of those listed are nameless, being described merely as 'The Occupier' of a certain property.

Among the opponents, opinion is now divided as to the wisdom or otherwise of boycotting the inquiry. All the main national environmental organisations, including Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace, the Scottish Campaign to Resist the Atomic Menace and (probably) the Town and Country Planning Association are intending to do so, but the key local authorities (Orkney and Shetland), the fishing industry organisations and some of the nearby anti-nuclear groups look likely to participate. Either way, cynicism about the whole process is widespread, with most of those involved interpreting the two-month delay merely as an attempt by Bell to win some credibility for his much-maligned inquiry.

Rob Edwards

See also 'Is Labour burying that nuclear vote?', p12

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SCAPEGOATS SOUGHT FOR CROYDON BENEFIT FIASCO

LAST MONTH the *New Statesman* revealed that 14,000 Housing Benefit claimants in Croydon had been waiting for payment for up to two years. Several people had been evicted as a result of a complete breakdown in the administration of housing benefits in the borough (*NS* 1 November). Now, a committee of enquiry set up by the council into the debacle predictably blames the housing department, and its report has led to the suspension of Adrian Britton, the housing director, his assistant director Phillip Ball and the chief benefits officer Terry Cutler. CHRISTIAN WOLMAR reports

THE SUSPENSIONS are being seen by the town hall unions and welfare agencies in the borough as a political diversion — and with some justification. The enquiry reports that 'modest savings' were unrealistically expected out of the new housing benefits system costs when the scheme was first implemented in 1983, but it fails to point out that the pressure to keep Croydon's rates low set the climate which made it hard for council officers to suggest expanding the department.

The enquiry team, which consisted of both Tory and Labour councillors, found that wrong figures on the backlog of cases were provided by the housing department: in August 1984 the housing department said the backlog was 13,224 when it was in fact 15,224; by April 1985 it was reporting 7,120 whilst the true figure was 12,189.

While it's difficult to see how the housing director could escape the consequences of this revelation, the suspension of the other two workers is seen by NALGO, the town hall white collar union, as 'scapegoating'.

Secretary Chris Gaiger tells the *NS*: 'Our disciplinary procedures have been entirely ignored because the council is anxious to be seen to do something because of the elections coming up in May. They had more than enough warning about the benefits office because it's been under-resourced from the word go.'

Early warnings ignored

Indeed, councillors had claimed that the huge backlog of cases came as a surprise to them. But in April and May the Croydon Unemployed Workers Centre wrote a very detailed letter to every councillor on the situation in the housing benefit office. 'Only five replied to the first letter and two to the second' said Alison Butler of the centre. 'They can't now claim that they didn't know about it.' The Croydon Housing Aid Service had also constantly raised the issue. The council's Labour group has belatedly taken up the cudgels by demanding the resignation of council leader Peter Bowness.

The Labour group feels that Bowness, who is now working on the dismantling of the GLC through his chairing of the London Co-ordinating Committee, was clearly anxious to respond quickly to this embarrassment in is own backyard by suspending the three. But, as Alison Butler put it, 'the service is likely to become even worse as a result'. Indeed, a council spokesperson said that there were still '50,000 cases to review' and that an efficient service would not be provided until at least the autumn. ●

Sellafield fears spread south

WORRIED COUNCILLORS in North Wales have called a public meeting to discuss the extent of radioactive pollution from Sellafield along the coast.

The meeting was called by Gwynedd county council's public protection committee after councillors heard reports of the high risk of radioactivity in the Irish sea. It will be attended by the four local MPs and 'experts' on nuclear issues from both sides, although the participants haven't yet been selected. The council, controlled by Independents, operates a nuclear-free zone policy.

A local scientist, Dr Eirwen Gwynn of Llanrun, claims that people could be risking their lives by eating fish caught in the Irish Sea, and councillors were impressed with a report by Cumbrians Opposed to Radioactive Environment, which estimates that 2.2 million gallons of radioactively contaminated water is pumped into the sea from Sellafield every day. The report identified radioactive caesium, a nuclear waste material, as being present in fish and shellfish caught in the Irish Sea. Councillors heard Dr Gwynn's views at a meeting in Caernarfon.

Dr John Hunt, chief of the radiological control section of the Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food, who has monitored the radioactivity, says the Irish Sea is now the most radioactive in the world. This has startled some councillors.

Councillors also saw a report by Manchester University suggesting that areas other than N. Wales could be more badly affected, as a study showed that coastlines there had only 2 per cent the radioactivity of that near Sellafield. An earlier report had linked the high incidence of leukaemia in Lancashire towns with eating fish from the Irish Sea.

Steve Cliffe

Peace Protests Roll Call (22)

Total arrested in UK and Eire since September 1981: 9,722

Arrests to date by location

Salisbury Plain, Wiltshire
24.11.85. 5 arrests on Mass Trespass of Salisbury Plain in protest over US cruise missile convoy on nuclear war exercises. **5**

Molesworth USAF Base, Huntingdonshire
18.11.85. 5 arrested when workmen moved in on the eve of the Geneva talks to build a new main gate security area. Charged with 'intent to breach the peace'. Peace campers who spoke to the workmen discovered that most of the workforce were unemployed Northern Irish men plucked from dole queues. They had been brought over the day before work began without being told where they were going or what sort of work was to be expected. **5**

Brawdy Snowball Campaign
3 people, Bruce Watkins, Joe Funnell and Donna Cowley arrested after cutting the fence at Brawdy were found guilty at Haverfordwest Magistrates on 18 Nov. Fined £40 each although first conviction in all three cases and in spite of the fact that damage totalled only £46.

London CND Rally
Charges against Roger Franklin and Pete Brown for handing out leaflets likely to 'incite criminal damage' at Lakenheath airbase (Snowball), have not yet been dropped. The leaflets were no more 'inciting' than last three issues of CND's *Campaign* about the 6 February Blockade.

London, Houses of Parliament
4.12.85. 33 'Snowballers' arrested after chaining themselves to railings at Westminster Bridge Road. 22 charged with 'Obstruction of Police'. Police released another 11 with a caution even although some had previous convictions. 3 Cruisewatch members who came to support were very roughly arrested. **33**

Tax Resisters
2 peace campaigners who have for some time been withholding a portion of their taxes have been given 'proffered' prison sentences. Arthur Windsor of Gloucester has been sentenced to 3 weeks in jail commencing May 1986 and Roger Franklin two weeks in jail beginning 1 October 1986.

Greenham Common
26.11.85. 9 arrested when 21 vehicle cruise missile convoy returned to Greenham airbase. 3 later released without charges and 6 reported for charges of assault on police, or damage to police uniforms and a police vehicle, and obstruction. Chief Inspector Brackim of Thames Valley admitted that 4 policemen were sent to casualty department as 'a precautionary measure only' to get paint out of their hair, eyes and mouth. Women had been thrown into gorse bushes at one point when holding yoghurt cartons full of paint to throw at the convoy — women's clothes and police uniforms were covered in paint. **9**

30.11 85. 11 women arrested after entering base. Appeared before Newbury Magistrates after being held in custody all weekend. 5 accused of 'stealing' USAF unforms which they were wearing when arrested and 6 with boarding a USAF pick-up truck. 3 pleaded guilty and were fined £15, another 4 pleaded not guilty and will appear in court next year. The 5 accused of stealing the uniforms had their case adjourned; pending MoD investigations they were released on bail despite prosecution's pleas to have them remain in custody. All 5 have to sign on daily at Newbury Police station until January 3, even on Christmas and Boxing Day. **11**

Soulthorpe USAF Base, Norfolk
Fakenham Magistrates sent another 7 snowballers to jail for non-payment of fines on 10 December. They have been given sentences from between 7 and 21 days.
Helen Woodson — US Plowshares peace campaigner — has had her 18 year sentence reduced to 12 in the appeal court. Helen was jailed for doing what many of us dream of doing — taking a pneumatic drill to a filthsome nuclear weapon body.
To write to Helen and many others like her please contact War Resisters' International, 55 Dawes St., London SE17 1EL and ask for the *Prisoners for Peace List*.

● Christine Saltmarsh who lives near Alconbury USAF base (*NS* 20 September) was out exercising her dogs near her home with her 11 year old son, handicapped daughter and 3 week old grandchild. As her son played about happily in woodland at the bottom of a field a blue van approached rapidly . . . out jumped two suspicious policemen. 'What are you doing?' they wanted to know. 'Oh, as you can see I'm busy setting up a huge peace camp,' Ms Saltmarsh replied through gritted teeth. Unfortunately they believed her, and would not go away until they had satisfied themselves as to who was 'crashing about in the woods' (her son). Gone are the days of family strolls — round US nuclear bases anyway.

Please send new information to ***Janey Hulme*** *at the* New Statesman

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THE SAD DEMISE OF THE HI-TECH MOUTH ORGAN

ONE YEAR ago a company set up to make electronic harmonicas crashed with losses of over £1m. Not a single instrument had been sold. The company had some prominent backers, including the Governor of the Tower of London and an eminent QC. For Christmas, JOLYON JENKINS recounts the disastrous story of how the Establishment dabbled in the rock music business — and got its fingers burned

MILLIONISER 2000

THE IDEA for the new musical instrument came to Swiss inventor Walter Muller in 1983. Muller, a well-known harmonica star of the 1950s designed — in partnership with a Basel electronics firm — a fairly conventional analogue synthesiser controlled by a breath-operated, hand-held unit. The inventors then realised that the control unit could have other lucrative applications, in, for example, the medical, military and industrial spheres.

Muller turned for help to Kenneth Bagnall QC, a Deputy Judge of the Crown Court, a Freeman of the City of London, and a member of the Institute of Directors. Muller is related to Bagnall through marriage.

The marketing of the mouth organ and its spin-offs was done in a rather curious manner. The normal way with an unknown product in a 'green field' situation is to complete the R&D on the kitchen table, and to expand gradually. Instead, a company was formed, Millioniser 2000 Ltd, with a board of directors which included Major-General Andrew Patrick MacLellan, the Governor of the Tower of London — who personally invested around £1,000 — along with Bagnall, other prominent businesspersons and Muller himself.

Still with no product (apart from a few prototypes,) and no manufacturer either, the board started to spend money in an alarming way. A suite of offices was rented at 50 Pall Mall and the managing director was authorised to lease a 4.2 Jaguar; Touche Ross were appointed as accountants and a well-known PR firm was engaged. A graphic design company was paid £15,000 to come up with a logo for the company letterheads, which was reproduced on customised plastic rulers for the office. A promotional video cost £50,000. Three musicians and musical consultants were hired, all of whom remain unpaid to this day — one lost several thousand pounds.

Bagnall and his managing director, together with their wives and Muller, flew to the States to give demonstrations to the Clayton Medical Foundation and the Baylor Medical Institute. The trip ended in disaster when the synthesiser was knocked over and broken. Nobody had thought to bring a replacement unit or an engineer.

At this stage, one of the backers, SUMIT (Sharp Unquoted Midlands Investment Trust), realised things were going badly wrong and insisted on installing one of its employees as managing director. There was by now little that could be done, although the company continued to try to drum up support with a series of demonstrations for likely investors, including Richard Branson's representative and the Eurythmics.

Rising taxi bills

By November, creditors were getting uneasy. The company even owed over £1,000 to a taxi firm, and although manufacturers had been appointed there was still nothing to sell. This didn't stop the company sending letters to members of the National Harmonica League inviting them to send cheques for £999 and asking them to attend demonstrations on dates, some of which had already passed. None of the demonstrations took place. The machine even put in an appearance on Tomorrow's World — just one month before the firm went bust. Minutes from company meetings show that even the 20 prototypes that existed were shoddily constructed and there were severe doubts about the manufacturer's ability to do the work.

With all the money spent, SUMIT pulled out, and the receiver was called in to dispose of the only assets — prototypes, patents and 'goodwill'. Muller and Bagnall bid against each other for the patents and Muller got them. Bagnall set up a new company with just two employees, both of whom left within weeks. One of them, Millioniser's demonstrator, found that his last cheque, drawn on Bagnall's personal account, bounced three times before being paid.

Bagnall tells the *NS*: 'Muller was badly let down by the City. He fulfills all his promise and when he reaches fulfillment the City boys walk away leaving him high and dry.' He described allegations of reckless expenditure as 'ridiculous . . . simply untrue.' He refused to discuss the matter further on the phone, offering instead 'a full press conference with all the information. You must choose whether you want the truth or whether you want a rushed libel action.' ●

MISCELLANY

Insincere apology

Mr Ken Smith on the phone, furious at being named, in last week's Miscellany, as press officer for Militant. *He doesn't* deny *that he holds such a post, but feels that 'with the current enquiries and threats of expulsion from the Labour Party' it could jeopardise his 'personal position', if mentioned. Fair enough — would readers please cut out and discard last week's column. In support of the investigation we offer another fact. Press releases from the Labour Party Young Socialists (legitimate) are arriving at these offices in envelopes identical to those from Militant (illegitimate). The two organisations share a computer, it seems.*

'Foreign Office? What Foreign Office'

Strung along

Jane's Defence Weekly occupies an unusual place in the credibility hierarchy of the British press. On the one hand it claims to be accurate down to the last unexplained bulge of the belly of a Soviet Frogfoot. On the other it depends for its copy on the Nato military establishment and for its advertising on the Euro-American military-industrial complex. There's an unpleasant conflict of loyalties. When, for example, a US naval intelligence analyst named Samuel Morison supplied *Jane's* with a photograph of a new Soviet aircraft carrier — mistakenly thinking the US navy would like to see it in print — *Jane's* helped supplied evidence for the ensuing successful FBI prosecution. Perhaps it would have helped if he was Israeli, like Yossef Bodanski, one of their regular Washington stringers. Bodanski, we can reveal, is under investigation by the FBI for alleged involvement in the Israeli spy scandal. He used to work for an Israeli airforce magazine, and his information is good enough to have come only from classified sources — he's even broadly hinted that he was and perhaps still is an Israeli agent. *Jane's*, however, won't have a word said against him. Their spokesperson tells us that he can't remember who introduced Bodanski to them but is sure he came with reliable credentials: 'Come come, we are a reputable magazine.' But how do they check what he writes? 'Sometimes, as you know, stories are more or less uncheckable except by the person who wrote them. But we take great care in what we publish.'

Ignorance is bliss

A curious story appeared in the papers after the Colombian volcano disaster. No one seems to know where it came from. But even the Guardian *reported that two British helicopters sent to the rescue from Belize 'could not get permission to overfly or refuel in Nicaragua' (19 November). It wasn't true — the British Foreign Office said immediately that Nicaragua 'co-operated promptly in providing landing and refuelling facilities' — but Norman Tebbit is not a politician to allow a detail like that to get in his way. He has rushed to the defence of the Federation of Conservative Students, whose idea of a foreign holiday is to drive around in a jeep with the US-backed contra terrorists in Nicaragua. Two weeks after the Foreign Office denial, he wrote to Labour MP George Foulkes saying people who didn't like FCS support for the contras shouldn't be fooled into thinking the Nicaraguan government was* nice — *'in the light of its refusal to allow relief helicopters of the RAF. . .' All right, Norman, go and eat your breakfast.*

Start writing *now*

Miscellany doesn't see why it shouldn't have a Christmas Quiz like everyone else. Unfortunately there are no prizes available — the budget having long ago been exhausted by the purchase of squeaky toys — so it might be best to regard what follows as a *test*, easily answerable by anybody who has paid attention to this column over the past year. 1) What mechanism do Vestey's directors use to summon their personal assistants? 2) Which organisation was told by the Home Office that it never interferes in the day to day running of the BBC? 3) Who made a pop record which finished 'when the lights go out, don't blame us'? 4) To which charity did the prime minister suggest Cecil Parkinson ought to donate his broadcasting fees? 5) Which government minister, according to *The Times* 'was Great Uncle Bulgaria in the Wombles pop group'? 6) And which one, according to the *Daily Telegraph* 'became General Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party seven months ago'? 7) What did the Princess of Wales excise from an ITN programme about her and her husband? 8) Who was praised in 1979 for 'a reputation based more on his skill in human relations than on engineering'? 9) Who threw a bicycle in a river saying 'if you're quick enough you can catch it'? 10) Who said 'I do occasionally read the *New Statesman* but when it says something about me I don't'? Answers after the hols.

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HOW'S YOUR STREET-CRED?

Our annual ideological purity test for the right-on activist*

**though actually this is the first year we've run it.*

Answer the following questions:

1) The US invades Nicaragua. You would a) buy shares in Lockheed b) switch to Brazilian coffee c) start a Troops Out movement in Bermondsey.

2) The experience you brag about most is a) getting invited to The Queen's garden party b) getting thrown out of The Queen's garden party c) getting concussion at Orgreave.

3) The experience of which you are most ashamed is a) being arrested for soliciting/kerb crawling b) being

arrested for soliciting/kerb crawling in Wigan c) being asked to join a Neighbourhood Watch scheme.

4) You look forward to World War III because it will a) show we didn't back down b) be a grand Wagnerian spectacle c) raise proletarian consciousness.

5) You go to demonstrations because you get a) overtime b) a subsidised coach c) a good spot to sell the *Rising Worker*.

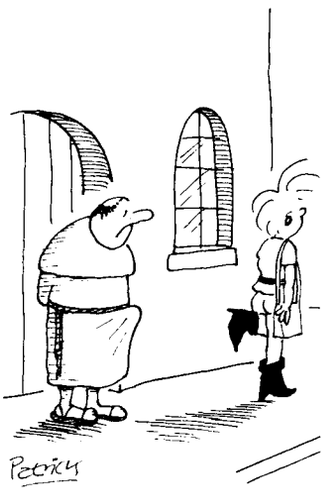
6) You met your present partner at a) a Hunt Ball b) *Gai Londres* c) an Unemployed Workers Centre Benefit Disco.

7) AFTER sexual intercourse you say a) was that traffic wardens? b) darling, that was almost wonderful c) listen, luv, I've really got to go to this meeting.

8) BEFORE sexual intercourse you say a) I don't think the Jag's parked properly b) darling, this will be wonderful c) listen, luv, I've really got to go to this meeting.

9) Answer only ONE part of this question

i) You are a MALE celibate because a) you can't trust them, really b) you have the facts wrong



on Aids c) your lover has gone to Greenham.

ii) You are a FEMALE celibate because a) really, you can't trust them b) *they* never sleep in the damp patch c) your lover has gone to Greenham.

10) Your walls are covered with a) embossed wallpaper b) original music hall posters c) undistributed leaflets.

11) You watch *Dallas* for a) JR's management techniques b) its low camp clothes and decor c) its portrayal of the inherent rottenness of post-industrial capitalism.

12) You ride a bicycle to a) keep fit b)

outrage motorists c) fight the oil multinationals.

13) You go to Labour Party meetings because a) you need to update your file b) someone will always buy you a drink afterwards c) let's face it, it's the closest thing to a mass party there is.

14) You thought Neil Kinnock's speech at Bournemouth was a) demagoguery b) too long c) opportunistic demagoguery.

Complete the following sentences:

15) Sara Keays is a) a rat b) a successful small businesswoman c) an oppressed sister.

16) Anarchists are a) sinister figures with bombs under their coats b) poseurs in black c) unreliable.

17) Vladimir Ilyich Lenin was a) anti-Christ b) a tourist attraction c) wrong in his interpretation of Marx's Theory of Value.

18) Nicking a video in Handsworth is

a) a criminal act b) a popular act c) a revolutionary act.

19) Totalitarianism will finally have arrived here when a) Arthur Scargill's face is stamped on the £5 coin b) Jeffrey Archer wins the Booker Prize c) children of breast-feeding mothers on supplementary benefit are deemed to be receiving free milk.

20) Reading the *New Statesman* is a) subversive b) thirtyish c) ideologically not quite sound.

SCORE: *1* for each b; *2* for each a; *3* for each c

47-60. Congratulations! You are a committed activist with absolutely correct attitudes. However, are you sure you are quite serious enough? After all, you've just completed a frivolous questionnaire in an elitist magazine. Could you admit this to a comrade?

33-46. You are a right-wing fascist pig and ought to be shot. The only positive thing that can be said for you is that you're a *committed* right-wing fascist pig. Your only stumbling block is that you appear to read this magazine. Come to think of it, why are you reading it? You certainly aren't interested in new ideas.

20-32. You are an apathetic, smart alec, clever dick *Private Eye* subscriber, who thinks that any issue can be avoided by making witty quips. But remember, life is serious and you are not. Whichever side wins, comrade, you will lose. May your angora rabbit get the mange and your Film Society card run out.

Rem Bel + Collective

Illustrated by Patrick Kavanagh

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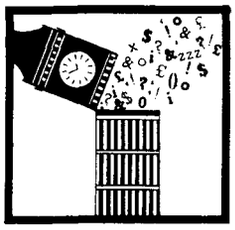

The year after the year after nineteen eighty-four

MRS THATCHER was more nervous than usual. She had decided to leave Downing Street at dusk in order to reach Finchley before the election results programmes began. Both in 1979 and 1983 she had been certain of victory before the first vote was counted. Today, on 27 June 1986, she was less sure.

Whispers of a snap general election had been sweeping Westminster for weeks. The earliest suggestions had been mooted six months before, but few paid any attention. Why throw away a 139-seat majority two years early, it was asked; and nobody could provide a rational answer. Indeed, Tories who recalled Edward Heath's decision in February 1974 to call an election 16 months early were quick to warn the Prime Minister of the dangers of repeating his mistake.

Curiously, it was the Heath precedent that had finally persuaded Mrs Thatcher that she *should* call an early election. She was determined to succeed where he had failed — and her success (she firmly believed) would add another nail to the coffin of Heath's reputation. Besides, wielding power satisfied only one part of Mrs Thatcher's psychological needs. She also liked winning battles; and the battles she most liked winning were elections.

There were, however, more practical reasons for dissolving Parliament early. One — the publicly stated reason — was Ireland. During the winter she had dismissed Ian Paisley's claim that Ulster would be made ungovernable. She calculated that a tax and rates strike by Protestants would not last, and that when Paisley was seen to be blustering without backing, she would gain the credit for calling the Unionists' bluff.

Not for the first time a British Prime Minister had misjudged Ulster. The tax and rates strike had indeed been less than total. But it was sufficiently strong in some areas for Tom King to have a serious dilemma: should he leave the dissident pockets of Protestant protest alone — and risk the strike spreading? Or should he take action, and if so do what? Lord Whitelaw, remembering how Britain's heavy-handed response 15 years earlier to Catholic grievances had fuelled support for the Provisional IRA, urged caution with the Prostestants.

Mrs Thatcher, however, was unmoved. 'Sometimes, Willie, you are so wet', she scolded him. 'Gracious me, if we let some people get away without paying their taxes, others will follow; where will it all end? Look, if they weren't so stupid they would hire good accountants, just as all Denis's friends in the City do, and find perfectly legal ways to hold on to their money. But if they are determined to have a fight, then I shall give them one.'

Whitelaw struggled vainly with the notion of tax specialists touting for customers at the gates of Harland and Wolff, and found the proposition too absurd for words. So he uttered none, and Mrs Thatcher took his silence as assent for her plan.

So when the Prime Minister announced to the nation in early June that she would hold a new general election, she couched her arguments in terms of the need for a fresh mandate to extinguish Ulster's threat to the authority of Westminster.

Mrs Thatcher's unspoken reason for dissolving Parliament was different. Consumer spending was rising. Nigel Lawson's spring tax cuts had just started feeding through to workers' pay packets. Most people in work had never had it so good; and the numbers out of work were very gradually falling.

All the Treasury's calculations, however,

PETER KELLNER

were that the consumer boom would peter out early in 1987. The balance of payments would deteriorate, unemployment and inflation were likely to stop falling, the pound would come under pressure, interest rates might have to rise and there might even have to be tax *increases*. Condensed into the single sheet of paper that the PM had asked for, these forecasts looked all the more gloomy. Better to hold an election early, she reckoned, while the going was good.

Moreover, the opinion polls were unanimous in reporting a Tory lead. It was not a decisive lead — five points on average — but the trend was in the right direction. Lawson's budget had been popular, and Mrs Thatcher was (as usual) winning credit for standing up to an unpopular adversary. The omens for a snap election could not have been better.

THAT WAS four weeks ago, Mrs Thatcher mused as her car passed Swiss Cottage; how things had changed during the campaign.

Saudi Arabia's decision to step up oil production further caused the first blow. The spot price of North Sea Oil fell by three dollars in a morning — and it was the Tories' bad luck that a rogue poll the same day showed Labour and the Tories neck-and-neck. Nervous foreign exchange dealers sold all the sterling they possessed and some they didn't, and the Bank of England had to step in to force interest rates up. Questioned at that morning's Conservative press conference, Mrs Thatcher insisted that the measure was purely temporary. As soon as the Tories were returned to power, she said, confidence in sterling would be restored; there was no question of Britain's recovery faltering. The country was on course for further tax cuts.

For some anonymous civil servant, the Prime Minister's words went beyond the bounds of legitimate propaganda. By four o'clock a brown envelope marked 'personal' had landed on Joe Haines's desk at *The Mirror*. It contained a photocopy of the single-sheet Treasury warning that the Prime Minister had received just ten days earlier. But was it genuine, Haines wondered? Fortunately he had kept in touch with enough people from his own days in Downing Street. By six o'clock he had his answer: it was.

The following day Mrs Thatcher had difficulty controlling her temper with journalists at Central Office. 'Grave betrayal of trust . . . just one of many forecasts that are being prepared all the time . . . if we jumped every time the Treasury computer said jump, my goodness this country would be in a mess'. And so on. Nobody was convinced, the questioning got tougher and the Prime Minister rattier. It was, then, some relief when one reporter began his question with the words, 'I'd like to ask the Prime Minister about something completely different'.

Mrs Thatcher's relief did not last long. 'Can she confirm or deny that three Conservative candidates are under investigation by the Fraud Squad as part of their inquiry into Lloyd's?', the reporter asked. Mrs Thatcher smiled acidly. 'As you know I cannot comment on police investigations of any kind', she replied. 'Do you know who the candidates are?', asked another reporter. 'I will not comment', said the Prime Minister banging her fist on the table. Her answer satisfied nobody — except, that is, the editors of ITN and BBC TV news. They had their story and their image of the day. No matter that the details of the Lloyd's affair, like that of Johnson Matthey, were excruciatingly complex: it was the whiff of Tory ordure that mattered, not its precise chemical composition.

Tory attempts to retrieve lost ground by switching attention to defence were scuppered by President Reagan. In an unguarded comment he 'remembered Dr Kinnock well' from his last visit to Washington and saw no reason to fear from a change of government 'in England'.

As Mrs Thatcher recalled, as her car sped past Henly's Corner and entered Finchley, there was little she could do after that except trade on her personal qualities as a tough, effective leader. But that too had been undermined during the previous weekend. She had addressed one of her campaign's few big rallies and returned to Downing Street tired, but with a feeling that all was not yet lost. After two large whiskies she thought that she might win her third election victory after all.

It was at that moment — the memory still pained her — when Sir Robert Armstrong entered her room and brought her the news she dreaded. 'I'm afraid we have been beaten, Prime Minister', the Cabinet Secretary said. 'Argentina are through to the semi-finals'. □

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HERE'S A DREDDFUL NOEL TO YOU ALL

SALLY VINCENT has been discussing the future of the human race and particularly the masculine portion with Max, aged 9

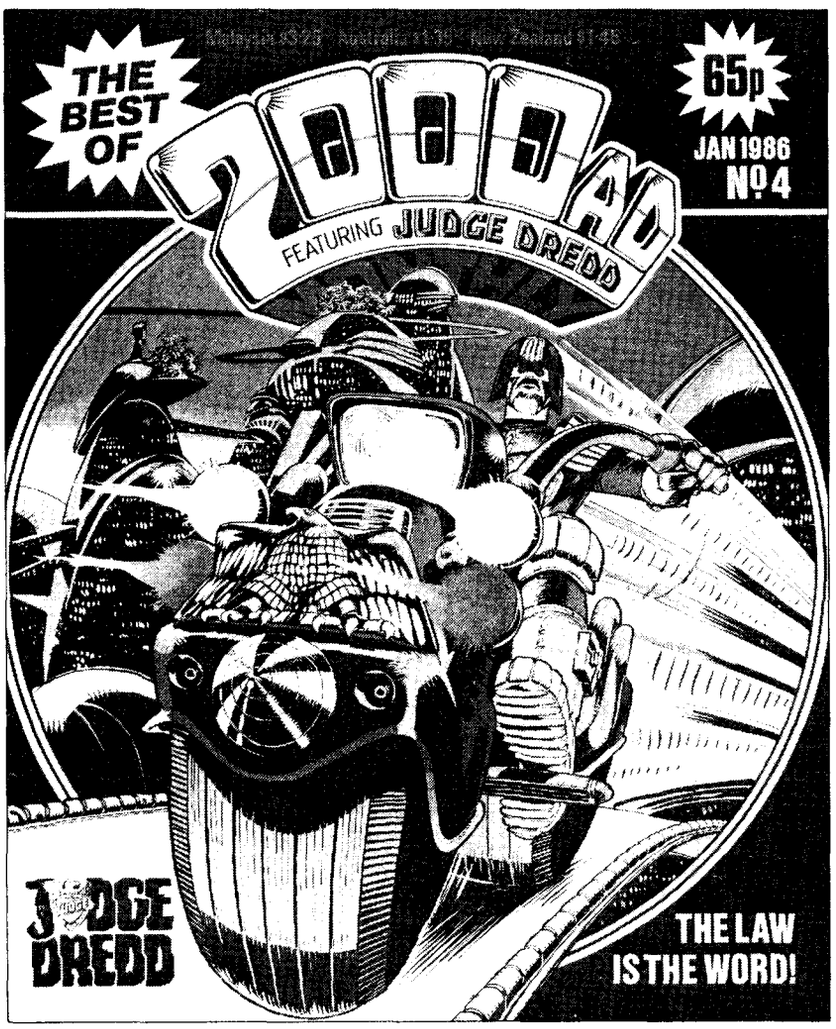
2000 AD IS A COMIC, brought to you by IPC, those wonderful folks who gave you *Nova* and then blasted it out of the water a decade ago. No, *2000 AD* is the cult artefact of the decade, *the* comic, a major export, generator of inestimable spin-off commercializations, the bible of a probable half-million British schoolboys and the abiding obsession of my friend Max who is nine years old and has only wept once since he was four and that was when he accidentally shot a can of coca-cola over his *2000 AD*. Sometimes I think Max is possessed.

His idea of paradise, he told me once, is this great place where everybody gets moved about in this great tube and wherever you look there are these great videos on. And all these great monsters are roaming about outside and when you're not watching the videos you go and out kill them. Only mostly you just watch these really, really great videos. Of course he got the whole thing out of *2000 AD*. What he was describing was straight Mega-City One.

So the dreadful has already happened, they've dropped the big one, the world has been wiped out. All that's left is Mega-City One, a hotbed of violence and perpetual entertainment situated New Yorkerishly between a polluted Atlantic and the rest of the poisoned earth, where an omnipotent lantern-jaw with a helmet on top goes by the name of Judge Dredd and keeps law 'n order with all guns blazing. When Judge Dredd says Die, you Die. Kaboom. Splatttt. Gaaaaarrrrk. Whem Max grows up he wants to be Judge Dredd.

'Suffice to say,' writes the editor of *2000 AD* in his appropriately authoritative literary style, 'Mega-City One is vastly more exciting than our society.' And he knows of which he opines. As in Reagan's Star Wars programme, today's fantasy is tomorrow's reality and without inspiration both are indistinguishable in our culture. We may be of the backward '80s, but we are already hot on the heels of paradise. We're getting there. We have only to capture our children's imagination, give it a whiff of cyanide gas, pin it to the page and Bingo, we have a good, obedient citizen in the making, pre-scripted, prescribed and proscribed.

Santa isn't dropping toys down chimneys this Yuletide because toys are nasty, subversive things, redolent of such dangerous activities as free association and play, which as we all know can only lead to chaos. No, Santa's boxing up pre-packaged fantasies this year, brand-name status-objects, functionless belongings, group-identity kits, images from a promotion scheme that leads to the ultimate in passive acceptance of their totalitarian symbolism. Vaguely familiar playthings now come with their own book of rules, as though some invincible mastermind has already played with them and determined the parameters of their place in a child's life.



FOR INSTANCE, once upon a time there were dolls. They were bland, blank, neuter things. You gave one to a little girl and left it up to her to invent its character and function in her own mind. It might be her pretend baby or her imaginary friend, her audience or her punch-bag. It didn't lay down the law. But there's no such thing as a doll any more. There are Sindies and Barbies, Julies, Cherries and Bonnies (reduced for the season), there are ballerinas and flower fairies and cabbage-patch foundlings. They are concepts, not playthings.

This year, in reverent recognition, no doubt, of Princess Diana's recent achievements, the concept is the new-born infant. Or to give it its proper code-name, the NB bracket New Born unbracket, a minutely detailed facsimile of the RT bracket Real Thing unbracket, which comes complete with foetal face and bandaged belly-button and an instruction manual so that its potential possessor does nothing more untoward with the creature than make sure her NB is kept well away from draughts and cover her NB to keep it warm when the weather is cold.

The actual purchaser of the NB is slightly less constrained in his or her activity, since it is allowed that a choice of gender be made. This, however, was merely academic as of 5 December when this researcher performed her investigations, since all the boy NBs had been snapped up and only thousands (and thousands) or girl NBs were on offer. But there, such perennial manifestations of sexual discrimination are of microscopic significance in the grander, Mega-City One scheme of things and besides, our kids have probably already been softened up with a Care-Bear before their gender training got underway.

A Care-Bear is our first moral policeman. It's a

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kind of sugar-pie coloured, toothless chipmunk with a wisp of humanoid hair, its heart on its feet and a symbol of something adorable (cake with candle, two hearts-a-twining, smiling sun, stork carrying bundle) stuck on its gut. 'Care-Bears', its wrapping tells you in three languages and no uncertain terms, 'are thirteen roly-poly little bears who live high up in a land of rainbows and fluffy clouds called Care-a-lot. They are always keeping an eye on things down on earth and whenever you want to share your feelings with others, they come right down to help.'

By the time we are two, then, we have our very own, pastel shaded, soft-cuddly, all-seeing, all-knowing fairyland vigilante whose eyeball is firmly affixed to the peep-hole of our soul. We know exactly where we are with a Care-Bear. We're ready for the doll-object when it comes. We're ready for the instruments of destruction and torture if we happen to be of the male persuasion.

All these things are mere intrusions upon imagination that has already been invaded. The baby really belongs to Princess Diana. The guns and rifles and grenades really belong to the *A Team* who have already played all the games in the book with them. Little Johnnie holds Mr T's automatic repeater rifle and feels closer to Mr T. Mr T already possesses his entire imagination. Little Johnnie may not exercise his own aggression because Mr T has fought and won all the wars and thwarted any heroic imagination the lad might have found in himself. The personnel of popular culture are imprinted upon possessions, is all, so that there is nowhere for a child to project his own individuality that has not already been occupied by another, stronger and more powerful imagery.

WHICH IS WHY once the longing for possession is realized, a kid can't think of a damn thing to do with his or her new object except have it standing there, owned. Then, of course, the sheer paucity of its function creates a desire for another, similar Thing, rather as the more literal consumption of junk food triggers a perpetual hunger for more of the same nothingness. This self-generating vacuity is nowhere more evident than in the current top-selling boys' toy novelty which goes under the generic umbrella of a 'transformer'.

A transformer is a useless Thing, that when you press a couple of knobs and twist the odd hinge, turns into another useless Thing. Hence an enormously complex and detailed, man-shaped gadget becomes, hey-presto, an enormously complex and detailed car-shaped gadget. Babooom! And back again. Little boys like to show you how their fingers are capable of this small transformation. Click, click, click, then back on the shelf. There is nothing else to do with it.

Of course, if it's a particularly large, and therefore expensive, transformer, the robot might take a short walk and the machine roll along on its own accord, but it has no continuous function as an instrument of imagination, because nothing has been left to the imagination. Having wanted a transformer, then, a child cannot even imagine continuing to enjoy the thing once he has owned it for the first time. The thrill of possession was all. Once possessed it just stands there, representing itself in all its immaculate detail, a finished thing, sating the senses with the power of its own imagery.

MEGA-CITY ONE CRIMINAL CODE. SECTION 59(D): A JUDGE MAY ENTER A CITIZEN'S HOME TO CARRY OUT ROUTINE INTENSIVE INVESTIGATION. THE CITIZEN HAS NO RIGHTS IN THIS MATTER.
DREDD
GOOD EVENING, CITIZEN.
CRIME BLITZ!

And don't imagine Margaret Hilda, riding Douglas (Hurd) on law n' order, would see anything much out of the way in this — the first page in a *2000 AD* story (cover opposite)

All the 'options' have already been taken. The child's imagination has literally been objectified. His only real option is to passively obey and accept the intrusion. He has been totalled.

Our culture is already Judge Dredd's. In Mega-City One the populace is dispensible, every man-jack of them. Except Judge Dredd. He is a transformer toy, a man that turns into a machine and back again. Dehumanized and licensed to kill he has no emotional being, no personality, no social dimension, no conscience. In one of his rare verbalisations he describes his own paradise. 'Mega-City One', he says, '800 million people and every one of them a potential criminal. The most violent, evil city on Earth . . . but, God help me, I love it.'

He is, after all, an entirely '80s figure. A sentimental totalitarian, not unlike our own Margaret Hilda Roberts, aged 13½. Doubtless the ensemble of gentlemen who fantasised Judge Dredd and his environment in the first place would argue it is all mere new frontiersmanship, a space-age, post-nuclear cowboy story where good and evil collide and good comes out on top.

But myths and fables have a societal function. They're about the struggle towards maturity and moral responsibility. As a small myth, which is probably what its authors would claim it to be, Judge Dredd falls on all counts. There is no 'moral' in *2000 AC*, only message. And the message tells and retells how humanity might be managed towards a law-abiding, robotic and dead society. The violence is mythic, but there is no mythic moral to balance it. Might is right is all. And the only might that is right is ORGANISED might. □

This England

£3 Book Tokens for entries printed. (On postcards please).

□ Workers should pay more tax on their wages, which the Government should then return to their employers, Lloyds Bank's economic adviser suggests today. — *Yorkshire Evening Press* (P.Leach)

□ One recognises also in Oxford the 'cultivated man'. A person of refined sensibility and comprehensive appreciation of the most prized elements of intellectual culture. They are the exemplars of learning for the rising generation. — Prof. A. H. Halsey, in *Oxford Magazine* (Top Paulin)

□ Ministers are unlikely to be found actually lying. Far more common was for ministers 'by judicious presentation and omission, giving an impression to parliament that would not be the one formed if someone had all the evidence.' — *Guardian* (George Moor)

□ 60 Sheffield gardeners have been rewarded by their council employers for 25 years' hard work — with a potted plant each. — *Daily Telegraph* (W. Pugh)

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THE WOLVES IN GRANNY'S CLOTHING

HOW MILITANT DUG DEEP FOR VICTORY

As Liverpool's '85 of agony draws to a close, STEPHEN KELLY and IAN WILLIAMS analyse the long-range planning behind Militant's behaviour with more documents from the 1960s

THE NEW STATESMAN has been handed documents which together constitute the 'missing link' in Militant's entrist evolution. They confirm that *Militant* is not 'just a newspaper' but is in fact the public face of the self-proclaimed British Section of the Fourth International. Militant leaders have always lied about the link, long known to their critics.

The papers date from 1964 and cynically chart the prospects for organised entrism into the Labour Party. Included is the draft constitution for the Revolutionary Socialist League (RSL), showing its structure of branches, committees and conference with strict internal discipline. Revealingly its two final paragraphs say:

> All members holding public office, paid or otherwise shall come under the complete control of the party and its organs.
> All members of the RSL are required to work in the mass organisations of the working class under the direction of party organs, unless otherwise directed, for the purpose of fulfilling the aims of the party.

The 'party' of course is the RSL, not the Labour Party, which is described with an appreciative degree of cynicism in a later document, *Entrism and the Labour Party*, as 'not a political Party in the normal sense . . . but more a Federation of Groups' with a 'looseness which allows one, in the words of George Brown, "to drive a horse and cart through the constitution".'

The same document then laments that the activities of the rival Socialist Labour League (SLL), Gerry Healy's group (now the Workers Revolutionary Party or WRP), had created a 'climate of opinion hostile to Trotskyism' in the party. Indeed it calls for condemnation of their actions as 'irresponsible and damaging to the development of the Left-wing.' For people of the Mrs Do-as-you-would-be-done-by ilk it's worth remembering at times of 'witch-hunt' scares that when Healy was expelled from his Labour Party ward in the '50s, Ted Grant, the RSL's guru *abstained*!

The SLL — like the RSL and International Socialists an off-shoot from the Revolutionary Communist Party — had by 1964 got control of Labour's Young Socialists. The SLL Young Socialists were expelled in 1965, leaving the field clear for the RSL, until then the least significant of the three Trotskyist groups which had tried to 'enter' the Labour Party.

Entrism (or entry-ism, in its less exact spelling) was the line decreed for British Marxists by the Trotskyist Fourth International, the only strategy that was thought to have any chance of success in a country with a mass anti-Marxist working class party — the Labour Party. The RSL had been awarded the Fourth International 'franchise' in 1956.

A MEASURE of their devotion to the Labour Party is indicated by 'We have always had a flexible attitude to entry work, recognising the validity of other areas of work, eg CND, The Young Communist League . . .' To explain the apparent paradox of members of an entrist organisation working so hard for the Labour Party, the same treatise explains:

> A Base, be it a CLP . . . or a joint TC & LP cannot be created without years of consistent and patient work. Only those prepared to enter fully into LP work, week in week out . . . those who accept positions of authority and take on the humdrum tasks of Labour Party Life can succeed.

It then describes the rewards for such effort.

> We never fully understood the possibilities which arise from controlling, for example, a CLP; let us look at what has been achieved in the past:
> 1) The consistent advancing of the Marxist Cause.
> 2) The publication of printed and duplicated material expressing our case on major issues of the day, and which cost the organisation not one penny.
> 3) The circulation of other CLPs with material and statements and arising from this invitations to speak and the gaining of new contacts.

Why should a dour revolutionary organisation like this tolerate and encourage a flamboyant Derek Hatton? Could it be the call for

> (a) The building of our comrades as leading personalities in their areas, *constant fighters on local issues*?

Well if so, perhaps in the light of recent events, you can spot the deliberate mistake:

> (b) The developing of a *realistic* municipal programme based on practical and realistic demands!

The 'just a newspaper's' story begins in spring of 1964, when a memo to the National Committee

Comrades informed of their 'elementary duties' 20 years before coming to power in Liverpool

Dear Comrade,

London.

October 1964

In view of the recent unification it is necessary to emphasise certain aspects of our work and the elementary duties of comrades, and in doing so to clarify certain problems.

The address for all correspondence is c/o WIR Publications, 14 Bow Lane, London, E C 4. It is necessary to address each letter for the Secretary, Treasurer, Bookshop, etc, accordingly. This is especially important for finance. Monies for The Week, and for the Militant should be sent to the addresses below. If monies are sent to the centre there should be clear indication for what they are intended.

A new constitution is being drafted, but in the meantime the organisation functions on the basis of the statutes of the International. Both the RSL and IT constitutions have the same content.

Comrades have been placed in charge of different aspects of work such as education, student work, and so on. These comrades will be preparing material for general distribution. In the meantime comrades are asked to ensure that regular reports are sent in to the centre on each industry, IP, student

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Ted Grant, the guru who *abstained*

of the RSL solicited 'approval for a plan to bring out a printed youth paper in the immediate future'. Perhaps it at once anticipated and caused the dreary prose style of the future *Militant*, by complaining of a 'shortage of competent writers' and proposing that 'comrades like Ted (Grant) must accept responsibility . . . for training our youth comrades to write.'

During the summer of 1964, the paper was then planned at frequent RSL executive and national committee meetings, attendance at which is minuted by initials, recognisably those of most of the currently expelled 'Editorial Board'. (With the advent of computerised code-smashers, the comrades with fiendish cunning now *reverse* their initials on internal documents!)

Pat Wall, Peter Taaffe, Ted Grant, Keith Dickinson all feature. Apart from their agreed minimum dues of 6/- per week, a hefty enough sum in its own right, the committee started its phase of primitive accumulation by levying members 10/- to pay for a delegate to the Fourth International. Later it was to call for extra dues according to means.

10 May 1964 saw the meeting convened by Taaffe to set up the Youth Paper, which was seen as a national, printed version of *Youth for Socialism*, a duplicated magazine produced by Liverpool Garston CLP and Young Socialists. The original idea seems to have been to get the CLP to sponsor the production, in accordance with the ground rules for entrism on the cheap. At this stage the RSL was very much a Tale of Two Cities: London and of course Liverpool.

THE 7 JULY MEETING was quirkily pivotal in naming the paper. Ted Grant was opposed to the name *Militant* which later propelled him from sectarian obscurity. He wanted *Forward*, but was outvoted for *Militant for Youth and Socialism*. But he was very firm, whatever the name, that it was to be 'a tendency paper' and the 'EC would have to go through the material.' A document in September specifies: 'By "Tendency Paper" was meant an entrist propaganda paper, applying the programme of Trotskyism within the Labour Party and the TUs, and this paper *The Militant* would be the main journal.'

By August the minutes recorded that a) copyright was to be in the hands of the General Secretary of the RSL, which was then veteran Trotskyist Jimmy Deane, and 'b) The political policy was under the control of the Executive Committee' while 'c) the National Committee (of the RSL) would elect the Editorial Board'.

The same meeting decided that all articles would be signed, which has been the practice ever since. But to emphasise the relationship between RSL and Militant, Sinna Mani, the acting editor, said, 'The policy of the paper was in the hands of the EC via its reps on the EB' and anyway the 'make-up of the Editorial Board was exactly on the lines of the instructions of the General Secretary.'

In October all is well in train, and a circular from the RSL to branches tells them that money for the *Militant* should be sent c/o WIR Publications, which is still Militant's financial face to the world. The final invocation doesn't call for the return of a Labour Government pledged to Socialist Policies, but 'Forward to the Building of the British Section of the Fourth International!'

The entry had been made, and the 'Entrism' document tells it like it's going to be, stressing the need to 'concentrate on obtaining a base in three of four CLPs, and where this has started 'a plan of action must be drawn up, having as its aim the ultimate control of the CLP in question.' It recommends 'the formation of a caucus as the best possible method of operation', and that to win over the uncommitted Lefts 'strict discipline should be avoided' in such prototype Broad Lefts.

OTHER PLANS include the formation of an 'Area Editorial Board', and injection of local issues. But anyone basking in feelings of Left solidarity with the RSL should beware, since they are enjoined to 'waging a continual fight against the fake lefts'.

The picture is clear. Not 'Just-a-newspaper', a forum of like-minded people, but a centralised and disciplined sectarian attempt to use the apparatus and status of the Labour Party to build the 'British Section of the Fourth International'. In their internal 'British Perspectives, 1979' they reveal their continuing utilitarian attitudes to what they then called the 'Tribunites', the 'left-reformists' of the non-Trotskyist Labour Left.

After ridiculing their 'reformist illusions' they sound a tactical warning. 'Tony Benn has an enormous personal popular support among the workers. Marxists must approach this question very carefully . . . A friendly approach is absolutely essential *if the ideals of Marxism are to gain a hearing*'. The implication is a friendship not of comradeliness, but of convenience until the sectarian teeth can be shown.

But the call will go out because of the NEC's Liverpool probe, that now is the time for all the fake lefts and 'left-reformists' to unite to defend the right of the Fourth International to infiltrate the Second, for the RSL to burrow untrammelled in the Labour Party. Labour Lefts may well resist so-called 'witch-hunts' on libertarian grounds, but these documents should warn them of the dangers of being used. There are genuine broomsticks in Militant's cupboard! □

Stephen Kelly works for World In Action.

THAT'S ENOUGH ATOMS

IS LABOUR BURYING THAT NUCLEAR VOTE?

Hey, anyone noticed? Labour Party policy on nuclear power altered dramatically in 1985. But what would a future Labour government actually do? ROB EDWARDS reports

IT HAPPENED on the morning of Wednesday 2 October at Labour's annual conference in Bournemouth. Sandwiched uncomfortably between two pieces of drama difficult to forget — Kinnock versus Scargill on retrospective legislation and Blunkett versus Hatton on Liverpool ('Will you do it, Derek?') — the Labour Party took a historic decision. For the first time ever it came out comprehensively against nuclear power.

Since then so little has been said in the left press (including the *New Statesman*) and so little done by the Labour Party, that frustrated anti-nuclear activists are entertaining suspicions of cover-ups and conspiracies. As always, it is far more likely that short-sightedness and cock-ups are to blame.

The conference agreed by 3.9 to 2.4 million votes to express its abhorrence at the 'potentially catastrophic effects upon the environment of the continued use of nuclear power' and called for 'a halt to the nuclear power programme and phasing out of all existing plants'. The motion — passed against the advice of the National Executive Committee — marked a watershed in the Party's long internal battles over the issue and should put an end to the confusion created by previous conferences' contradictory decisions.

The main reason for this year's change of heart was the hardline anti-nuclear power motion passed by a two to one majority (again in defiance of the executive) at the Transport and General Workers' Union's biennial delegates' conference

INTERNATIONAL BRIGADE MEMORIAL APPEAL

The Memorial to the International Brigade having now been erected in the Jubilee Gardens, South Bank, London, the Working Group wishes to thank all who supported the above Appeal and to announce the winding-up of its affairs at the New Year.

Jim Jump (Secretary)
Tel: 0702 346423

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in June. The pro-nuclear lobby within the Labour Party has now dwindled to little more than the engineering workers (AUEW) and the electricians (EEPTU), and they were either so demoralised or so distracted at conference that no-one even bothered to speak against the successful motion.

The decision reflects the extent to which opinion within the labour movement and within the country has swung against nuclear power in recent years. The main reasons for the shift have been the successful prosecution of British Nuclear Fuels plc for polluting the beaches near the Sellafield nuclear plant in Cumbria, the continuing controversies over nuclear waste, the debate over possible connections between low level radiation and childhood lukaemias and the growing awareness of the links between nuclear power and weapons. It also signifies the coming of age of the Labour Party's anti-nuclear power lobby, with much credit due to the skilful behind-the-scenes work of the Socialist Environment and Resources Association (SERA), Greenpeace, and the National Union of Seamen's leader, Jim Slater.

Of course the argument is by no means over. The pro-nuclear lobby will doubtless attempt a fightback, perhaps hoping to overturn this year's decision before the next general election. They will be most concerned to stress the number of jobs dependent on the nuclear industry and counter the threat of any plants being closed down.

SERA is determined to build effectively on this year's breakthrough and has already held a co-ordinating meeting involving most of the key anti-nuclear groups. Its chairperson (and mover of the motion at conference), Mike Malina, is confident that in future it will be possible to win enough extra votes (304,000) for the two-thirds majority necessary to ensure that a strongly anti-nuclear policy will form part of Labour's programme. That would depend crucially on winning over either GMBATU, the general and municipal workers' union, or the Union of Communications Workers and other smaller unions; which in turn could be critically influenced by resolving the classic 'all kinds of everything' energy policy fudge arrived at by the TUC this year *(New Statesman* 13 September 1985).

After the conference, SERA wrote privately to Labour leader Neil Kinnock urging him to remove John Cunningham, MP for the area including the Sellafield nuclear plant (Copeland) and a keen supporter of nuclear power, as the party's environment spokesperson — advice he has evidently ignored. Cunningham himself must be feeling rather sick: about 10,000 people work at the Sellafield nuclear complex in his Cumbrian constituency and his majority over the Conservative candidate at the last election was only 1,800.

IN THE LONGER TERM, the key question is what a Labour Party with a strongly anti-nuclear power policy might actually do if it came to power after the next general election. The consensus — agreed by at least one pro- and one anti-nuclear member of the Shadow Cabinet — is that Labour would not order any more nuclear power stations based on either the American-style pressurised water reactors (to which Labour has long been overwhelmingly opposed), or the British-designed advanced gas-cooled reactors (which Party spokespeople have supported in the past).

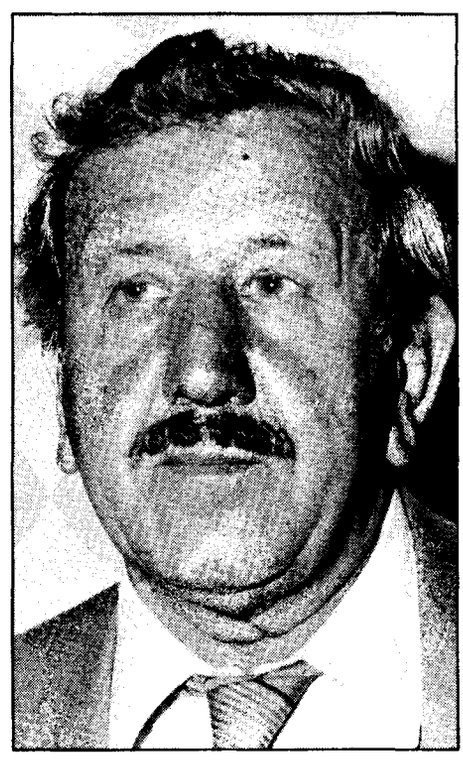
It is equally unlikely however that a Labour Government would prematurely shut down any of the nine electricity board Magnox stations or the five advanced gas-cooled reactors (ARGs) already commissioned. Trade union opposition and the fear of substantial job losses would almost certainly render any such course politically and practically impossible. 'Phasing-out' would be interpreted as allowing existing nuclear stations to come to the end of their natural lives, the whole process taking some two or three decades (as in Sweden where the aim is to close down every nuclear station by the year 2010).

The trickiest decisions would come on what to do with the two new AGRs due to be brought on stream at Torness in East Lothian and at Heysham near Lancaster within the next two or three years. Quite a convincing argument could be made for mothballing them indefinitely (as has happened with Austria's only nuclear reeactor at Zwentendorf since 1978), or at least until their electricity is actually needed. Alternatively, their nuclear guts could be ripped out and replaced with conventional fossil fuel boilers, a conversion that is certainly technically possible. But powerful lobbies in the party would fight hard for the two stations to be operated as planned.

Lamentably, since the conference resolution was passed, the Labour Party has done nothing to begin resolving such questions. It has not even set up a joint national executive/parliamentary party policy committee on energy, as it has done for virtually every other important policy area since 1983. The need to devote scarce resources to campaigning rather than policy development is indisputable, and the prolonged illness of the energy spokesman Stan Orme unfortunate, but can either be accepted as an excuse for not starting to work out a sane and practical energy policy?

In the immediate future, the Labour Party has still to come out for or against the nuclear industry's latest and most alarming wheeze — the plan to build a new European plutonium fuel reprocessing plant at Dounreay on the north coast of Scotland. So far the party has played safe, saying only that it would favour a wide-ranging inquiry — unlike the very restricted local planning inquiry due to open at Thurso town hall in February. While most internal opinion judges that it should end up opposing the development in line with the conference decision, this cannot be regarded as a forgone conclusion.

With the Dounreay proposal, as with the whole nuclear power debate, the crucial arguments are about employment. Greenpeace is due to publish its report on alternative job options around Sellafield in the new year. A similar study is desperately needed for Dounreay and, as the conference motion stresses, the Party should begin discussions with the trade unions in the nuclear industry on alternative employment strategies. Without such initiatives, this year's victory could turn very sour. □



City Syndication

Jim Slater of the NUS, a prime mover

CAROLLER TO SMITH SQ

WEEP FOR ADONAIS, FOR HE WAS TORY

Old fogeys ought to make lousy poets. The trouble is, this year's major poetic death, Philip Larkin's, didn't only rob Thatcher of an enthusiast, it stole from FRANCIS WHEEN one of his favourite writers. How's a socialist to cope with these paradoxes of art and ideology?

SOME THINGS, George Orwell once pointed out, are true even though the *Daily Telegraph* says they're true.

Some poets, one might clumsily add, are good even though they did write for the *Daily Telegraph.*

There's no getting round the fact that Philip Larkin was a Conservative. 'I've always been right-wing,' he announced in an interview with the *Observer* six years ago. 'It's difficult to say why, but not being a political thinker I suppose I identify the Right with certain virtues and the Left with certain vices. All very unfair, no doubt.' Asked what he thought of the Tory leader, he replied: 'Oh, I adore Mrs Thatcher. At last politics makes sense to me, which it hasn't done since Stafford Cripps (I was very fond of him too).'

I suppose it would be possible to argue that Larkin didn't really mean it, that his extravagant use of the word 'adore' in connection with Margaret Thatcher, his bizarre juxtaposition of

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Camera Press

A crusted old port, Philip Larkin, but a fine vintage too

Thatcher and Cripps, his self-deprecating asides such as 'not being a political thinker' and 'all very unfair, no doubt' — that all these are evidence that he was teasing, *épatant* the *Observer*'s readers rather than expounding his seriously held political beliefs.

It would be possible, but it would be a mistake. No doubt he was mischievously trying to shock liberals by saying that he adored Thatcher; but he also meant it. He was kidding on the level, and any attempt to pretend otherwise is as doomed to failure as was T S Eliot's effort, in his preface to *A Choice of Kipling's Verse*, to play down Kipling's political views. As George Orwell wrote in his review of the Kipling book, 'Kipling *is* a jingo imperialist, he *is* morally insensitive and aesthetically disgusting. It is better to start by admitting that, and then try to find out why it is that he survives . . .'

So, I start by admitting that Larkin was a shameless old Tory. Yet until his death this month he was, as he had been for more than a decade, my favourite living poet. It might be more ideologically sound to prefer Adrienne Rich, or Adrian Mitchell, or Linton Kwesi Johnson, but there it is. He has become a part of my mental furniture. Particular phrases and lines of his are installed in appropriate corners of the memory: 'days of thin continuous dreaming/Watching light move' (from *The Old Fools*); 'Why aren't they screaming?' (*ditto*); 'All streets in time are visited' (from *Ambulances*); 'Here silence stands/Like heat' (from *Here*); 'A larger loneliness of knives and glass/And silence laid like carpet' (from *Friday Night in the Royal Station Hotel*); 'The sun-comprehending glass' (from *High Windows*). And so on.

Of course a poet's achievement is not to be measured by the number of memorable phrases she or he produces (though I think a poet who *never* wrote a memorable phrase would probably be best advised to take up flower-arranging instead). And in an article of this length it is impossible to explain fully the attraction of Larkin's doomy, plangent pessimism for an incurable optimist such as myself. But this is, in any case, not my immediate concern.

What worries me is that more than a few people on the Left would consider it wrong to like Larkin's poetry, not because of the poems themselves but because he adored Mrs Thatcher. This is an old problem — as the Kipling example mentioned earlier suggests — but no less serious for that. As Orwell rather neatly put it in his Kipling essay: 'Nothing could exceed the contempt of the *New Statesman*, for instance, for Kipling, but how many times during the Munich period did the *New Statesman* find itself quoting that phrase about paying the Dane-geld?'

If I keep coming back to Orwell, it is because he is one of the very few writers on the Left to have dealt with this question honestly. Some things are true even though the *Telegraph* says they're true. Some people are capable of writing poetry even though they are Tories. Orwell returns to the point in his essay on Swift: 'In a political and moral sense I am against him, so far as I understand him. Yet curiously enough he is one of the writers I admire with least reserve, and *Gulliver's Travels*, in particular, is a book which it seems impossible for me to grow tired of.'

There are, of course, certain qualifications, as even Orwell accepted. He could imagine good books being written by people of most sorts — Catholics, atheists, Communists, Tories and others — but he admitted that 'one cannot imagine a good book being written by a spiritualist, a Buchmanite or a member of the Ku Klux Klan'. One might add to this list. Nazis, for instance, should be on it, as the dearth of literature from Nazi Germany proves. So should supporters of apartheid: it can hardly be coincidence that *all* the great literature from South Africa of the past 20 years or so (and there has been plenty of it) has been written by dissidents — Nadine Gordimer, Athol Fugard, Andre Brink and so on and on.

Philip Larkin was not a Nazi or a member of the Broederbond. He was a sensitive, rather sad librarian who wrote poems and adored Mrs Thatcher. Some people may think I'm imagining things when I suggest that there are socialists who would consider a fondness for Larkin's work incompatible with the True Faith. If so, they should look at the current issue of the *Literary Review*, in which two contributors, both of them on the Left, choose Doris Lessing's *The Good Terrorist* as the most over-rated book of the year. Here is what Tariq Ali has to say about it:

> How the great have fallen! A badly written, badly constructed book by the author of *The Golden Notebook*. The fact that it has been 'widely acclaimed' in the present ideological climate is sad but not surprising.

And here is Maggie Gee:

> Reviewers seemed incapable of perceiving that this book was a competently packed ideological tract, saddening in its will to stereotype and its freight of hatred.

At least Maggie Gee has the honesty to admit that her objections are purely ideological, rather than something to do with 'bad writing' or 'bad construction'. But it's pretty hard to sustain the charge that *The Good Terrorist* is merely a bundle of stereotypes. Several of the characters are all too painfully recognisable. What Gee and Ali seem to object to is that Doris Lessing has had the nerve to suggest that some people on the Left can be both infantile and nasty, even (or perhaps especially) to their own comrades. There is no freight of hatred; merely an understandable impatience. And there is much honesty.

Nevertheless, Doris Lessing is now, apparently, beyond the pale. And if even she is on the banned list, what chance is there for poor old Larkin? Give him your arm, old toad; help him down Cemetery Road.

'And ever more came out of that same door wherein I went' . . .

This was the plaint of a man who could not escape the common round of conventional answers to his questions. Perhaps he was stuck in beliefs — maybe even sacred ones — but he was stuck. Is there no way out?

Perhaps; if you would like to see, write to:

The Blavatsky Trust (B)
P.O. Box 16, London W3 6HS

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MEDIA

Why not a Minister for Cultural Industries?

JOHN ELLIS

WHY DO SUCCESSIVE British governments leave broadcasting with the Home Secretary, and relegate 'the arts' to a junior minister, usually without Cabinet rank? Surely broadcasting's natural place is with the other cultural industries, rather than with the police and immigration control? Or perhaps that's precisely why broadcasting is the Home Secretary's responsibility because it, like everything else he deals with, is a matter of control. For the Home Office deals with broadcasting under the headings of journalism and morality, which, from government's point of view, require restriction and careful surveillance. The current Arts and Libraries Office scarcely rises to such heights: its job is to say 'no' to a weak lobby of cultural artisans.

This situation is patently unsatisfactory. It leaves no coherent policy for the new media, since the industrial and technological aspects of new broadcasting media tend to be spun off towards the Department of Trade (who are responsible for the current mess in cable broadcasting). It leaves leisure industries scattered between a series of ministries, and tiny specialisms like the cinema shared out between two different ministries, so that nothing innovative has a chance.

The case for putting cinema under one minister has been incorporated in Labour Party policy statements in the past. But such policy statements are hard to find, since another result of the scattering of responsibilities for the cultural industries has been a blockage in policy creation. Lobbying bodies tend to address one minister rather than another. So the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom (CPBF) addresses the Home Office: but the Cultural Industries department of the Greater London Enterprise Board (GLEB) addresses the Arts Minister. One positive change was last week's joint meeting of CPBF and GLEB to publicise several new initiatives in media policy development; but energies will still be divided as long as broadcasting is separated from the other cultural industries.

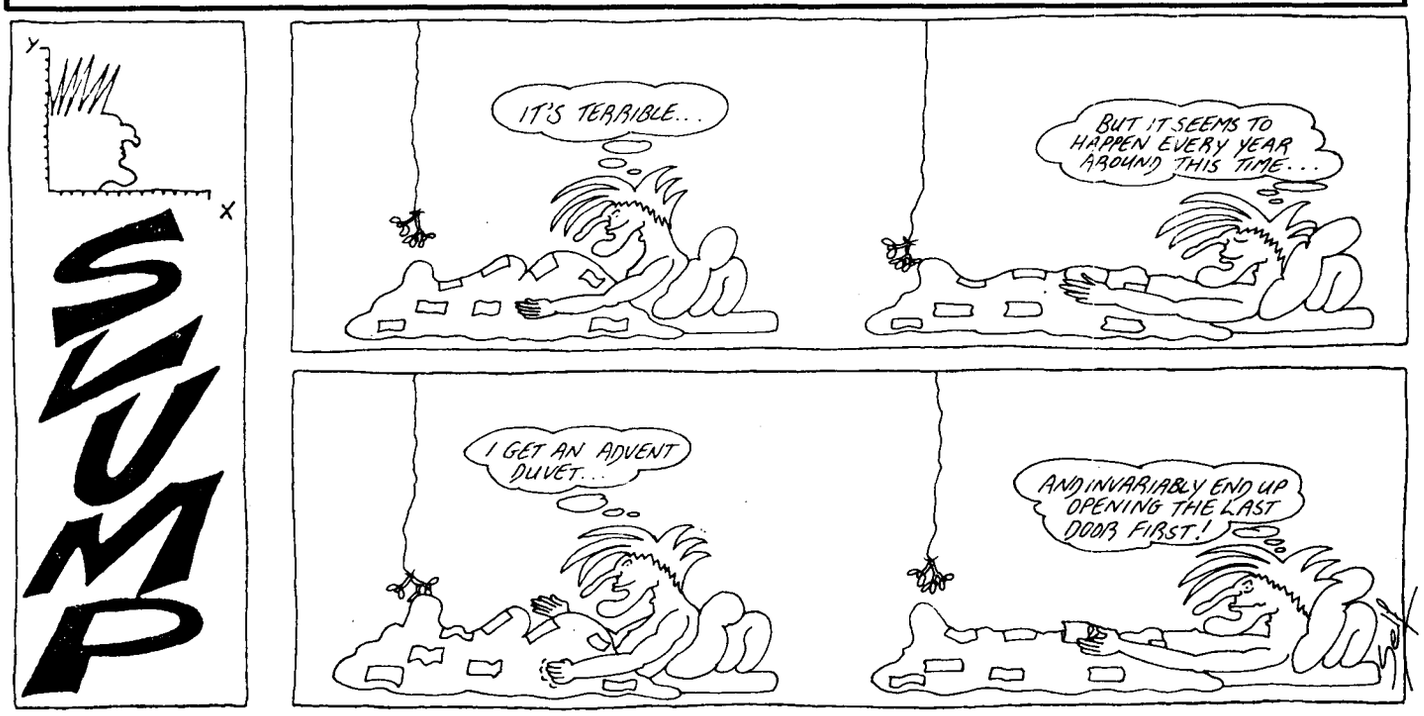
There is a powerful ministry to be created, whose responsibilities stretch from community arts to broadcasting (including responsibility for the press since most of the British press is more fiction than fact nowadays). Its basic tendency would be to encourage pluralism rather than to control media content. It would recognise that broadcasting is a matter of entertainment more than reportage, and has far more links with entertainment and leisure pursuits than it does with the recording of facts. And the arts would finally be combined with a powerful ally, recognising the profound mutual dependence between broadcasting and the arts.

The politically powerful broadcasting sector would thus lend its support to the politically weaker arts sector, on which it depends for so much. For as things are, TV (and radio) tend to plunder the arts, picking up ideas and individuals once their success has been proved in live performance, in publishing, in the visual arts. The performing and visual arts provide a valuable 'piloting' function for broadcasting, but receive only casual rather than systematic recompense and support from it. A combined ministry for culture and broadcasting would abolish the arts' feeble status at a stroke.

Such a ministry would also be able to deal intelligently with the current technological advances in the cultural industries, which are progressively abolishing the traditional distinction between artisan and industrial production. Indeed, artistic production could be held up as a model of the 'flexible specialisation' promoted by Robin Murray. The culture industries have always been concerned with production of single items rather than mass production. But the technological aspects of this process, especially evident in music, video and even the visual arts, are not dealt with by the same ministry as that responsible for the allegedly 'creative' end. So governments' response to the increasing tendency to integrate these two traditionally separate aspects has been to ignore it.

There is every reason why any future Labour government should adopt the policy of creating a single ministry which is occupied with the whole of the cultural industries, from community arts to satellite broadcasting. The only difficulty would be finding a name for this new ministry: it's clearly broader than 'arts' in Whitehall's anachronistic conception. Perhaps 'culture' would do at a pinch (better if it were 'cultural industries'), but the designation that best fits is 'Ministry for Ideological Guidance and Development', or perhaps 'Ministry for Signification'. But neither of these has a terribly British ring to it.

The Minister's first job would be to clean up the Obscene Publications Act, currently one of the more objectionable blunt instruments wielded by the Home Office. For any future Labour Home Secretary would be far too busy replacing the Official Secrets Act and the libel laws and introducing a Freedom of Information Act to be able to give priority to obscene publishers. In fact, it's such a dizzy prospect that I wonder which will be the more difficult, seeing a firm Labour Party commitment to these major administrative and legislative reforms, or seeing a Labour government elected next time. □


Y
X
SUMP
IT'S TERRIBLE...
BUT IT SEEMS TO HAPPEN EVERY YEAR AROUND THIS TIME...
I GET AN ADVENT DUVET...
AND INVARIABLY END UP OPENING THE LAST DOOR FIRST!

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DIARY

Chris Mullin

Vientiane

In Laos they have a saying *Bo Ben Nyang*. Roughly translated it means *mañana*. Except that in Laos *mañana* would convey too great an air of urgency. *Bo Ben Nyang*, someone once wrote, makes *mañana* sould like *achtung*.

I am here to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Lao revolution which has, if anything, slowed the pace of life. This makes Laos the world's most laid back communist state. Lao people are among the friendliest and gentlest in the world, much given to laughter, dancing and partying. This makes Laos a delightful place to visit, but an impossible place to do business.

○

On my last visit, four years ago, I spent 14 days pleading with the press department of the Foreign Ministry for permission to leave the capital, Vientiane, and only succeeded by attaching myself to a delegation of American Quakers on their way to the Plain of Jars. Mindful of this experience I was careful to inquire of the Lao chargé d'affaires in London, when he invited me back in April, whether I could expect to see something more of the country than the capital city. Certainly, he said, and we discussed a tempting programme of trips to the most remote parts of the country — to Sam Neua, the former revolutionary base area; to Long Cheng, once the headquarters of the CIA's secret army of hill tribesmen; to Xieng Khouang province, on which the Americans dropped more than two tons of bombs per citizen. On this basis I accepted — only to arrive in Vientiane and find business as usual. Or rather, no business as usual.

○

'You have come at the wrong time', said a man at the Foreign Ministry.

'I have come because you invited me'.

He is unmoved. A programme will be arranged for foreign journalists but it will not include trips to any of the aforementioned places. As for interviews with ministers, 'they are very busy preparing for the celebrations.'

There is nothing for it but to wait and see. Daily visits to the Foreign Ministry produce little in the way of hard information. Only a lot of *Bo Ben Nyang*.

There are worse places to be marooned. Vientiane is a city of about a quarter of a million people on the north bank of the Mekong River. More like a large country town than a city. The architecture is a pleasant mixture of French colonial villas and traditional Lao wooden houses on stilts. The bougainvillea is in full bloom. Lao girls, wearing the traditional skirt (known inappropriately as a *sin*), drift by on bicycles. At dawn each day Buddhist monks in orange robes are to be seen collecting the offerings of the faithful. Although Laos was once a wholly owned subsidiary of the United States, the Lao culture was never debased in the manner of Thailand, Indonesia or the Philippines.

○

By Day Three I have been joined by other journalists from Bulgaria, Poland, Cuba and the Soviet Union. Despite their fraternal status, they fare no better than I at the press department of the Foreign Ministry. We while away the days bemoaning the inability of the Lao to get their act together and searching out well-informed foreign experts. By now I have borrowed a bicycle and, clad in a Lao shirt, have started to blend with the landscape.

○

Day Five brings the festival of That Luong. I rise even before the first blast of propaganda from the loudspeakers that hang on every street corner (a gift from the Vietnamese) and join the thousands of citizens converging on the That Luong pagoda. The monks are all ages. Some only young boys. The Communist rulers of Laos have obviously decided not to tamper with Buddhism, and wisely so. Its roots run deeper than Marxist-Leninism. Lao Buddhism is in any case a merciful and tolerant religion — which goes a long way to explaining the benign nature of the Lao revolution.

○

Day Twelve is the one for which we have all been waiting. The tenth anniversary of the revolution. The parade starts at six in the morning and affords a rare glimpse of the Lao leadership, seven old men who have stuck together through thick and thin for more than 30 years. Perhaps the only one whose name would ring a bell in the outside world is the President, Prince Souphanavong, half-brother of the leader of the old regime, Souvanna Phouma, who threw in his lot with the Americans. Souphanavong is now a dapper looking gent in his late seventies. The parade is a rather subdued affair, lacking the spontanaity of many Lao celebrations. For me the saddest sight is the spectacle of Lao soldiers goose-stepping. The Soviet delegation looks on with approval.

○

Day Thirteen. Time to go. At last we meet someone with the authority to answer questions. Phoumi Vongvichit, the fourth ranking member of the Politburo, no less. He treats us to a four-hour press conference in which he amiably answers questions on every topic from Sino/Lao relations to the state of the Lao handicraft industry. No sign of the promised tour of the country, however. Instead we are treated to a whistle-stop tour of the country's miniscule industrial base — a factory that makes bricks, another making furniture, a plywood factory . . . We spend a pleasant but uninformative day at the Nam Ngum dam — Laos's principal source of foreign exchange. What, I inquire of the man who invited me, has become of the promised trips to Sam Neua and the Plain of Jars? 'Maybe you come some other time,' he smiles. *Bo Ben Nyang*.

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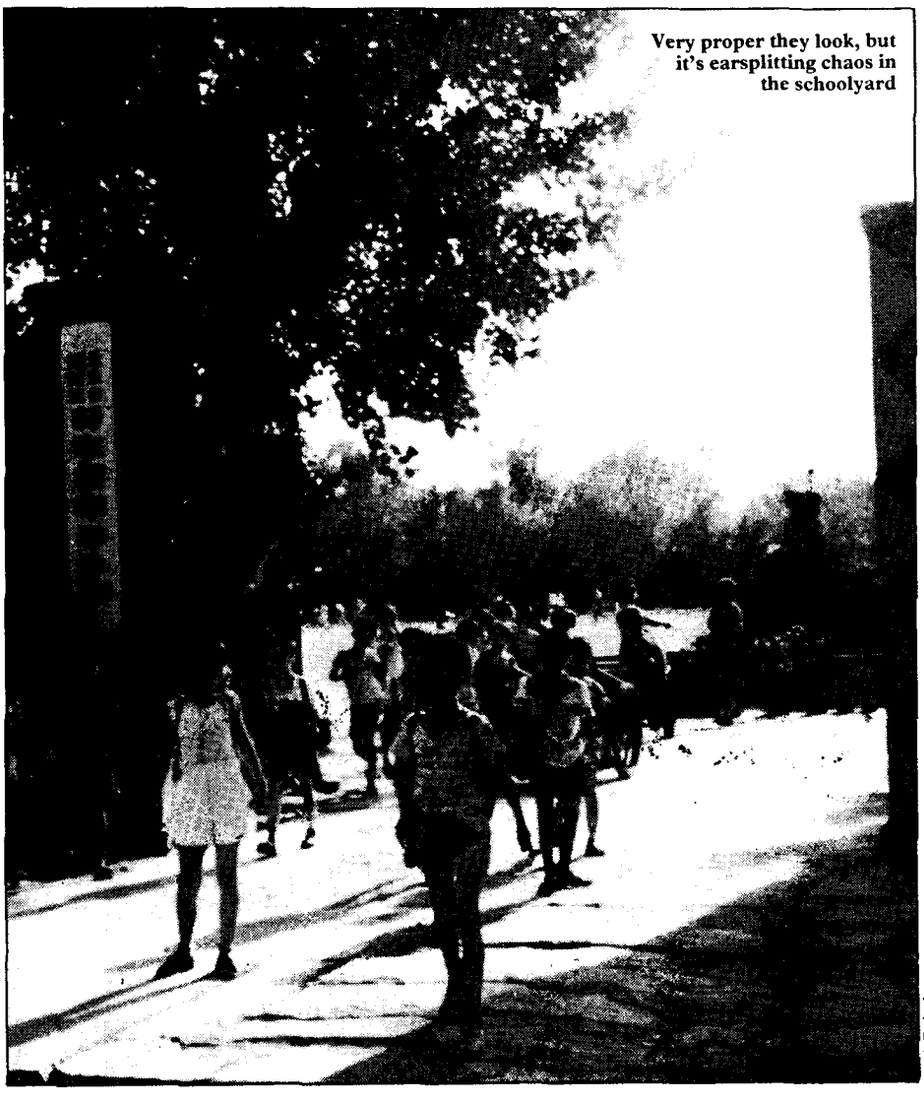

Very proper they look, but it's earsplitting chaos in the schoolyard

Ruth Balogh

THEY CALL IT THE RISING SUN

RUTH BALOGH sent her children to Chinese schools, where red is the colour of happiness

TAKING THE PRINCIPLE that the best school is the *nearest* school all the way to Beijing might seem to be going a bit far. But it brought us and our children a unique insight into the Chinese education system.

Most foreign children in Beijing go to the International School, which now boasts a three-year waiting list. For the liberal-minded, the less well-off and those on short-term contracts, the second most popular option is the top Chinese school in the city, where a special department provides a mixture of Chinese and Western education for the children of foreign experts, who study alongside the high-ranking party cadres' kids. But this school, too, was out of the question, because it was a bus ride away — and because corners of excellence within the State system were just the kind of thing we hoped we had left behind.

The time was autumn 1984, when the urban economic reforms were just being introduced. We had little inkling of just how deep the plunge would prove to be for our 6 and 7 year old daughters.

The lynchpin of Chinese society is the work unit. It is responsible for providing accommodation, medical and social services and education for its employees and dependants. Without one the Chinese is adrift in society. Likewise the foreigner — unless she enjoys access to large sums of foreign exchange.

My work unit was fortunately sympathetic to the needs of my children. Once they had grasped the peculiar phenomenon of a foreigner wanting a year's ordinary Chinese education for them, it was not long before they calculated this to be the cheapest and most convenient option, too. Within a matter of hours, the local school 'leaders' (a term that persistently stuck in my throat) had found two places in the reception class of Chinese 6 and 7 year-olds. The sole condition was that the girls should arrive knowing the Chinese for needing the toilet.

My initial anxiety was that the school regime would be too strict for our independent kids. The teacher, though, expressed *her* fears that the Chinese children would be too rough for the 'little foreigners'. I laughed at how reassured (and privileged) I felt to watch the quiet rows of classrooms disband every breaktime into an earsplitting chaos grand enough to put the Bash Street Kids to shame.

In spite of the girls' lack of conversational skills, the blackboard-to-copybook exercises posed no major problems for them — largely as a result of Mao's (unfinished) Language Reform Programme, which introduced Roman script in 1958 to combat illiteracy and to promote the Beijing dialect. Nowadays, all over China, the curriculum starts with the alphabet and progresses to Chinese characters later.

Our elder daughter came home waving red flags of merit stamped on every page of her copybook. They were only slightly sparser on our younger daughter's work. However, she obviously wanted to do better, so, with our Western prejudices, we reassured her that neatness would come in the fullness of time.

The worries our younger daughter was bringing home were in fact a reflection of her teacher's worries. We learned that in China educational goals are narrow and everyone is meant to succeed. More important, the school's reputation was at stake. The teachers were aiming for red flags on *every* page of *every* book in the school — and on this the very fabric of the school depended, for its share of the City Education Bureau's meagre funds was allocated according to performance.

The 'key' school system, as it is called, provides an elite ladder from primary school right through to the nation's top universities for between 10 and 20 per cent of school pupils. We had become enmeshed in the tension between egalitarianism and elitism and in the competition for scarce resources that is the central characteristic of the reform process in China today. As suddenly as the children had originally been accepted, the school doors were abruptly closed on them when we returned at the end of February 1985 from the spring festival break.

With only a day to go before term began, my employers were as surprised as I to learn that places were no longer available. As if to prove the material value of the red flags, the school leaders intimated that a substantial donation from the work unit would do the trick. The purpose of the money was, ironically, to build a wall.

IN CHINA TODAY the economic reforms are often described as a necessary accompaniment to the 'open door' policy — and here was an example. Since autumn 1984, when reform was introduced into the cities, schools have been permitted to raise funds independently. Whatever new fees, surcharges or contributions are dreamed up to ease the strain of providing not just an education for the pupils, but also housing and wages for the teachers, it is the parents' work

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units which ultimately foot the bill.

Party policy to close the pages on the cultural revolution by, among other things, raising the status of intellectuals, also adds to the pressure on schools to find ways to improve teachers' poverty-line salaries and living conditions.

But the absence of guidelines on fund raising had resulted in many commercial instincts, hitherto stifled, running riot in the winter of 1984/85 — and we had fallen victim. My work unit, as an employer of foreigners — and I later discovered that the eight of us took as much of the budget as the entire Chinese staff of more than 150 — had been identified as an easy touch. A month later, in April, we read in *China Youth News* of other cases where Chinese children had become 'pawns in conflicts over funding' — some having been expelled from school like our own when the work unit refused to pay up and others having their high school diplomas withheld until a fee for the document was forthcoming.

The key school system itself also became a subject for debate at about this time. A prominent Shanghai educationalist, Qian Weichang, argued that 'many of the unhealthy tendencies (a euphemism for corruption) in the current economic reforms are traceable to officials who have not properly understood how to proceed. Attention to key schools has meant neglect for the majority.'

Back at the office, my employers explained that they were unable to pay such an extortionate fee and unwilling to set a precedent with a school where other Chinese staff had their chidlren. So the first day of term found me off work on a tour of the local schools with my foreign liaison officer and the kids in tow.

It soon became clear that foreign children could not match the popularity of foreign exchange. I succumbed to a mounting feeling of gloom towards the end of a day spent tramping the bitterly cold dusty streets of Beijing's inner city, with my foreign liaison officer lacing the icy blast with grim tales of pre-Liberation privation as an orphan in Shanghai.

As we approached the final school, she outlined a new strategy to me — and it worked. She suggested to the headmistress that she might be able to negotiate special dispensation for my children from the City Education Bureau so that not a single red flag scored or not scored by them would count in the assessment of the school's performance.

The offer was accepted, the document procured, and with the magical speed that never fails to stun the foreigner in China when previously closed doors fly open, the next day the children were installed together in first grade (a year higher than before) in the second best school in the neighbourhood.

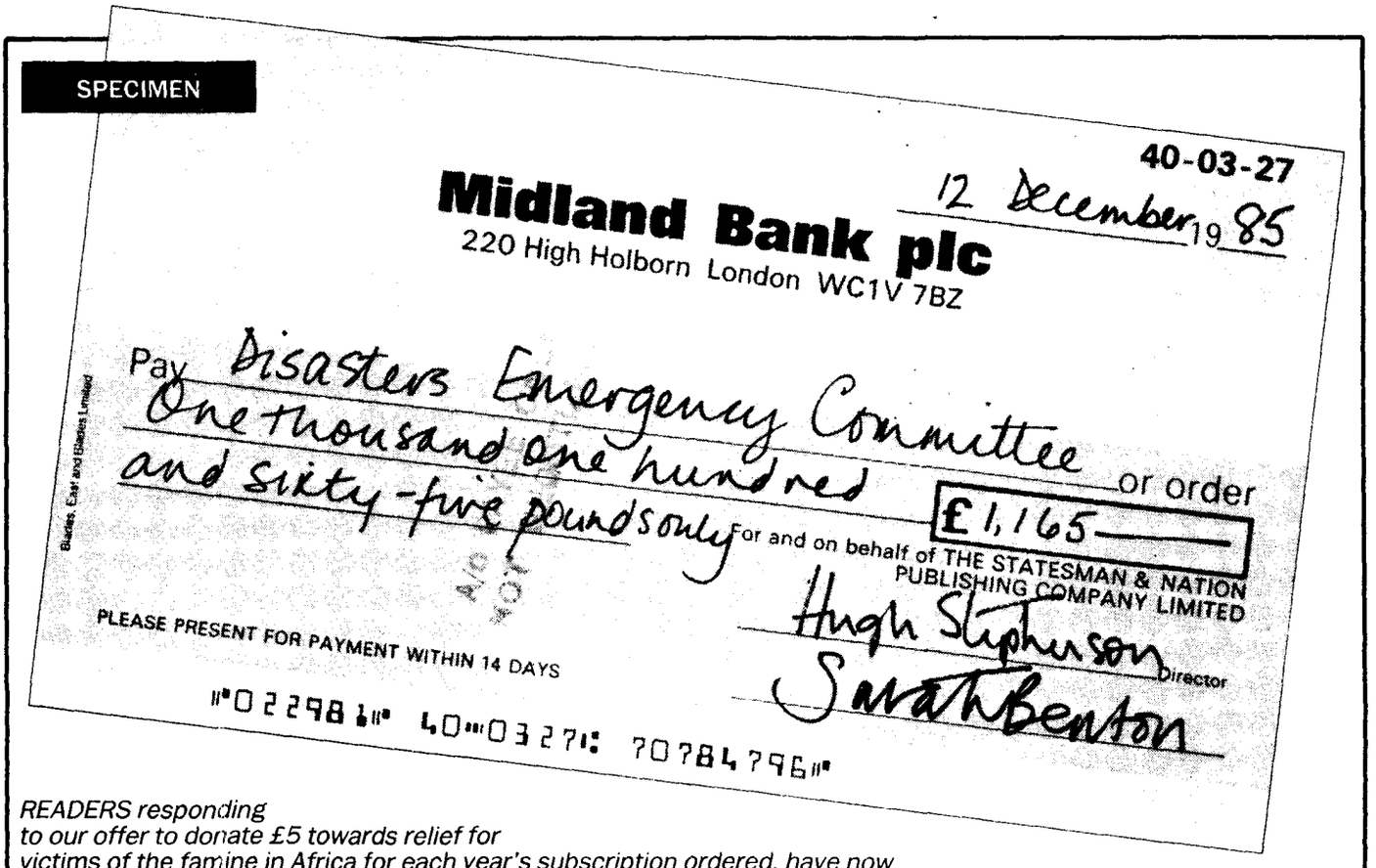
Although still the only non-Chinese speakers, both were gradually acquiring some verbal skills, learning their way round pocket dictionaries and able to use the first-grade textbook — a Rosetta stone of pictures, characters and phonetic script for which the teacher supplied the sounds. This 'total immersion' approach to learning standard Chinese is familiar to the teachers, for it is widely used among China's many ethnic minority children who come to rural schools speaking only their own local tongues.

THE HIGH POINT of the year was International Children's Day in June when, as the only really international feature of the school, we became honoured foreign guests and sat with the school leaders to watch a grand outdoor programme of song and dance displays, one of them an English counting song taught to classmates by our own kids. In an afternoon of noisy pageantry, fireworks and real red flags, the new year's intake were presented with their Young Pioneer red silk scarves by members of the year above. Only a small number of children (the incorrigibles, we surmised) failed to win this honour. Our daughters also came away empty handed.

Even this disappointment was smoothed away at the end of the year when the school Party Secretary asked me if they would like red scarves of their own. All that was needed was our permission for them to swear allegiance to the Chinese Communist Party. We joked about how useful this might be for them in later life and a special ceremony was devised with speeches, songs and presents from their classmates.

Returning to Britain the jest seemed perhaps not altogether idle. As socialists, it had been alarming to find that the current terms of political debate in China bear such a close similarity to those in Thatcherite Britain, with the Chinese Communist Party attacking egalitarianism, encouraging privatisation in the 'public' sector and applauding the export of Shanxi coal to Britain during the miners' strike.

But in China red is not only the colour of revolution, it is the colour of happiness. Our kids' contact with what the Tibetans call 'the rising sun mentality' may prove to be the best thing we could have arranged to improve their future employment hopes — which, in ten years' time could now, for them, be brighter in the East than in the West. □



READERS responding to our offer to donate £5 towards relief for victims of the famine in Africa for each year's subscription ordered, have now raised over £1,100. This has now been forwarded to the Disasters Emergency Committee (see cheque above). Full details of the scheme are set out on the form which is inserted in this issue for the last time.

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NIGARAGUA

REVOLUTION IS A MANY-ENDANGERED THING

The *Contras* kill their children and appear to be using germ warfare. But *la lucha continua*, finds BRIAN WILSON

Managua

THOUSANDS OF Nicaraguan volunteers went off at the end of November to harvest the vital coffee crop. They went into areas that were inaccessible a year ago because of *Contra* activity. Now, the army thinks it can guarantee their safety throughout the coffee-growing zones. For good measure, the world price of coffee is up on a year ago.

So all is not gloom within Nicaragua's beleagured economy. One way and another, the American economic blockade is being survived. Sure, there are shortages and massive inconveniences, particularly due to the difficulty in obtaining spare parts from the United States. But the resilience of the Nicaraguans is considerable. For instance, with Argentinian aid they have just completed a machine-tool plant to attack the spare-part problem.

It is obviously a source of great pressure that 50 per cent of the government budget is going on defence. Nicaragua desperately needs dollars and has managed to find new, if less satisfactory, markets in Canada and the West for most of the export produce now blacked by the United States.

The supply of basic commodities has been reasonably well-maintained, though there is currently a shortage of cooking-oil. Some of the normal supply comes from cotton seed and the rest is imported semi-processed. When the cotton-seed ran out there were just no dollars for the imports. Nicaraguans certainly don't like being without their cooking oil, but they are a long way from trading it off against the gains of the revolution, as Washington naively hopes for.

Men change slowly

Amnlae is the main women's organisation in Nicaragua, involved in both political work and cultural activities. It is also busily engaged in organising against the possibility of an American invasion. Mercedes Majia, aged 24 and with eight years of work for the Sandinistas behind her, is Amnlae co-ordinator for the region round Rivas, down near the border with Costa Rica. She explains that they have identified locations to which the young and old would be taken and cared for. The women are organised into fire-fighting brigades and units for taking people out of bombed houses. 'At the moment of the invasion', says Mercedes, 'production would come almost entirely from women with the men being released to fight'.

Already women are being integrated into industrial work. 'There was great opposition at first. Everyone said the women couldn't do the work — even the people responsible for running the industries. Some women were threatened and badly treated. We had to hold meetings with managements to discuss the problems and some men who had been behaving badly towards the women were actually dismissed.

'Now the women are having more and more responsibilities as they gain greater knowlecdge of the work. The government has introduced legislation which bans all forms of discrimination against women. But you can't make a massive change in a man's attitudes from one day to another. The situation is worse in the country — the attitude of peasant men is very bad. They are not aware of the role women can have in society. They have never been educated to think that way.'

Botched abortions

There are few easy answers, even after a revolution. At present there is no such thing as legal abortion in Nicaragua. In the countryside, the average woman has ten children and, in the towns, five. Birth control is legal, but there is a great shortage of the supplies to put it into effect.

Two pages of *Barricada*, the Sandinista daily newspaper, are devoted to a discussion of the abortion issue. This is part of a national debate on the subject that has been stimulated by the government, with a view to possible legislation. Yet everyone knows it is a matter of the utmost delicacy. In a country that is 90 per cent Roman Catholic — and for which international Catholic support is of considerable importance — liberal abortion laws would be seized on by the government's enemies as a stick with which to beat it. Yet the *Barricada* article points out that 45 per cent of admissions to a Managua hospital over the past two years resulted from illegal abortions. The debate continues.

Burying Monroe

Orestis Papi has just returned from Luxembourg in the knowledge of a job well done. As director of the West European section in the Foreign Ministry, his mission was to encourage EEC countries to maintain some level of support to Nicaragua — in the face of intense American pressure.

The Council of Ministers had duly agreed that there should be no economic discrimination against *any* country in Central America, whereas the Americans wanted Nicaragua specifically excluded. Britain and West Germany argued this American line within the Council's meetings, but did not go to the length of vetoing the majority view. The EEC aid will just be spread a little thinner in Central America next year, with five countries rather than three sharing in the same size of kitty. This year, Nicaragua is receiving around $12 million from the EEC.

Papi saw it as an important success, in preventing the economic quarantining of Nicaragua by the Western world, which the Americas would like to achieve. Indeed, he described the EEC's intention of maintaining an on-going interest in Central America as 'an end to the Monroe Doctrine'. Other countries are now taking an interest in Central America and do not necessarily feel obliged to toe the American line.

To emphasise the point, Papi had just come from a meeting with French embassy officials. The French are likely to repeat their gift of enough wheat to provide nine months bread supply for Nicaragua — which cancels at least a small part of the mischief wrought by the American-funded *Contras* in those areas of the country which normally supply the domestic market with basic foodstuffs.

Freedom to read

In Rivas, I meet people who are working on behalf of the Scottish Medical Aid Campaign for Nicaragua, which is funding the construction of a £50,000 health centre at Belen, a small town nearby. Just beside the site is a memorial to the people of Rivas who were slaughtered by the National Guard, just three days before the triumph in 1979. Their bodies were dumped down the town's well.

Norman Lockhart, who trained as a nurse at Glasgow's Royal Infirmary, is working at the health clinic at a big sugar refinery and plantation nearby. We go for a look round it and meet a young lad whose family he knows. They have moved to the area from nearer the Costa Rican border, following *Contra* attacks. Two of the boy's brothers are away fighting up north, while his father has lost a leg in the conflict. He's on his way to a little ceremony at the local school. This turns out to be a manifestation of Nicaragua's magnificent literacy campaign — these people, children and adults, attend evening classes in basic literacy. Today they are receiving certificates which testify to the fact that they are ready to move into the 'second grade'. A representative of the local civilian defence committee says a few gentle words. It is a time of great danger, but they must never forget the aims of the revolution. The war against illiteracy is just as important as the war against the *Contras*. In the past, the people were kept in ignorance so they would not know enough to challenge the rule of Somoza. Since 1979, illiteracy is down from 60 per cent to 8½ per cent . . .

In that little classroom, surrounded by poor people and shining honesty of purpose, it is impossible not to feel even deeper anger about what is being visited upon Nicaragua and contempt towards those who sponsor and finance its tribulations. Next day, I hear that in the north 32 schoolchildren have been murdered by the *Contras* — in the name of western freedom and democracy.

A la Vietnam

Is the United States using germ warfare against Nicaragua? The Nicaraguans certainly believe so, particularly in relation to a widespread outbreak of 'the dengue', an energy-sapping ailment spread by a special kind of mosquito. It was used in Vietnam and the Cubans have shown, to their own satisfaction at least, that it was deliberately introduced into their country.

The Nicaraguans have turned adversity to advantage. The offending mosquito resides in pools of stagnant water. A nationwide clean-up campaign has been undertaken to get rid of such breeding-places in towns and *barrios*. In a country that has just lost 32 of its schoolchildren to the guns of its enemies, it does not seem all that paranoid to suggest that other dirty weapons are also being used. □

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LETTERS

Heffer for Liverpool

Doris Heffer, Dolphin Square, London SW1

As a Liverpudlian, born and bred, I was disappointed to find a fellow-Liverpudlian, Ian Williams, using your Diary (22 November) to add to the cruel and tasteless distortions of Liverpool and its Labour Party members. He even managed to make his paragraph about the local International Brigaders sound flippant and of little consequence, save for a word about the fate of the Merseyside County Council.

He may well get a few cheap laughs at our expense among certain readers of the *New Statesman*, but he'd better watch out. If he's not careful he'll end up out-Waughing Waugh and West in the *Specator* who like nothing better than castigating that 'feckless and unruly Irish/Welsh lot' in Liverpool.

The Great Abortion Debate

Laurel Arnison, Keele, Staffs

I was extremely disappointed to read the recent batch of letters on the subject of abortion. Since we do not have a form of contraception that is completely safe and effective, abortion will continue to be the last unfortunate alternative to an unwanted pregnancy, and I do not see why those resorting to it should be vilified.

Betty Mackay's letter (29 November) infuriated me. She criticises Julia South's articles (*NS* 15 and 22 November) for being too simplistic (seeming to brand everyone who is ambivalent about the abortion issue as right-wing), but then goes on to suggest that pro-abortionists, whatever their political persuasions, are virtual Hitlerian fascists. She then says she is against the 'exploitation and domination of one group of people by another'. But isn't it exploitation and domination to force a woman who may have done everything possible to prevent conception to take an accidental pregnancy to full-term, when the technology available could, if used responsibly, allow her to terminate that pregnancy within days of its discovery? Who is more important? A fully developed, sentient human being capable of completely comprehending the physical/mental sufferings it is being subjected to or an undeveloped foetus? Surely the woman's physiological and psychological wellbeing should be put before the embryo's?

We then had Felicity Phelps (letters 29 November) saying that she cannot accept the principle of abortion on demand because of her involvement in anti-nuclear campaigns and desire to 'oppose the slaughter of future generations', as if the threat posed by the male war machine of wholesale destruction can be compared to an individual woman making a personal choice about her own body.

Incidentally if I were to suffer an unwanted pregnancy, I am by no means certain that I would choose to have an abortion, but neither would I presume to dictate to other women in the same situation what they should do with their own bodies.

Juan Campos, London N6

This is my third effort to get into the abortion debate going on in your pages. You only allow anti-abortion arguments within the narrow confines of the letters page, while the two articles you published were purely pro-abortion and failed even to raise the central objections to it, let alone answer them. Since it is obvious that the Left as much as the Right is divided on this issue (including feminists) why not follow the rules of fair debate and allow the radical anti-abortionists the chance to put their case at length?

While the 1970s saw the rise of a type of feminist mainly concerned with rejecting motherhood, more recently feminists are trying to reclaim the experience of birth and motherhood, emphasising the humanity of babies and the experience of birth and before for the child. This attitude inevitably betrays the dismissal of the unborn child as a mere appendage to the other's body, a non-personal object, so essential to the pro-abortion argument.

Other parallel changes of heart can be derived from the ecological concern with all forms of life, animal rights and a growing appreciation of tenderness and the 'feminine' as fundamental values to be recovered from the intimacy of individual relations and applied to the largest macropolitical and technological organisations and their aims.

Pauline Jones, Bromley, Kent

Thank you for Julia South's articles. However, in view of the letters published on 29 November, perhaps she was unwise to pose the issues in quite the way she did.

I too am opposed to abortion in principle, for much the same reason as Ms Mackey. One point that hasn't yet been made strongly (although alluded to by Ms Kenny in her reference to Ian Gow and Sara Keays) is the fact that abortion offers yet a further opportunity for men, both individually and collectively, to opt out of responsibility for contraception or the consequences of unwanted pregnancy.

I have been appalled with the attitudes of many supposedly left-wing men when I have tried to explain my feelings. For men to try to dictate how women should feel and to wish to impose the possible trauma of an abortion merely so that they can avoid the marginal inconvenience of using sheaths or having a vasectomy is a particularly nasty form of double think and oppression.

Two of your correspondents don't even mention the consequences of further restricting access to abortion. And to write as Ms Mackay does of an unwanted child as an 'inconvenience' and abortion as a 'protection of privilege' demeans and trivialises the process of bringing up a child — a task mainly left to women — in a way I find incomprehensible. It is far and away the most demanding responsibility I have ever undertaken; my fairly stressful job pales into insignificance in comparison.

Who them am I to judge whether any other woman is merely avoiding an 'inconvenience'? The argument is not about 'choice' in any usual definition of the word. It is — to adapt Ms Mackey's words — about giving 'protection to the weak and vulnerable members of society'.

Planning for planning

Michael Ward, Deputy Leader, GLC

Peter Kellner expresses scepticism about an economic recovery based on planning on the grounds that we haven't got the planners, and that it would take a long time (*NS* 29 November). As they used to say in the Goon Show, 'you can't get the wood, you know.'

He does less than justice to the case for planning. Of course it will take time — that is why it is vital that a Labour government must embark on a

Take me to your Leader
CHRISTMAS IN HELL
BY Meanin' Minnie
ISN'T IT UNUSUAL TO FIND A BUNCH OF BISHOPS IN HELL?
WE WERE SENT HERE BY NORMAN TEBBIT ACCUSED OF ASSOCIATING WITH THE LABOUR PARTY
Militant
WE WERE SENT HERE BY NEIL KINNOCK FOR THE SAME SIN
HARK! CAROL SINGERS
CAROL SINGERS AT THE GATES OF HELL? ISN'T THIS UNUSUAL...?
God rest you Inner Citizens, there's no need to despair;
The message from your Government is simply that we care.
Be sure your deprivation is a burden that we share
Just be patient, you know we understand
—We understand—
Just be patient, you know we understand.
The moans of Marxist clergymen are moans you should ignore;
Most of your present troubles stem from Labour's rule before.
If extra cash is called for we must give it to the Law—
Good hidings for rioters and reds
—Under their beds—
Good hidings for rioters and reds...
JOHN KINNOCK

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planning task as soon as it reaches office, and prepare for it in advance. Planned restructuring will not begin to bear fruit until the third or fourth years of a Labour government, but it will be vital then.

The way that a Labour government can get people back to work in its first year will be by revenue-based jobs in the public sector. More ancillary workers and nurses in the hospitals, more building maintenance workers, and more jobs in the education service.

In the second year of a Labour government you can get people back to work on capital spending. You cannot build roads or houses or hospitals overnight — to acquire the land, prepare the plans, organise the industry, and obtain the tenders always takes time. But from the second year onwards of a Labour government, large numbers can be got back to work in this way on necessary projects. Roy Hattersley's exhortation to public authorities to begin their plans for new spending now will speed this process up; but it cannot reduce the minimum time required.

But consider what happens if these are the only elements of the back-to-work programme. As the numbers in work begin to rise, and prosperity rises too, there is the natural demand for consumer goods. Unless from the first year of a government we have deliberately planned home production to meet that demand, we run the risk that consumer spending in the third and fourth years of a Labour government will bring about major balance of payments difficulties.

No Labour programme of good works is ever complete without a reference to railway electrification. But if all we do is issue contracts for the electrification work, we shall create two or three years of work for ballast shifters and cable layers, and at the end of the time find the country unable to pay for the capital equipment required. Unless we plan with the heavy electrical engineering industry to make the machinery and the locomotives, we shall find these too being imported. A Labour government will need to sit down with the major manufacturers immediately after the election and say to them that they can have five years of guaranteed orders, provided they locate production in a region that particularly needs it, and that they create training places and decent opportunities for black people and for women.

Planning is not a substitute for reflation; it is, however, a necessary condition for successful reflation.

Mercurial pique

G. Diprose, Environmental Adviser, ICI

Ian Williams's article on mercury in the Mersey and Liverpool Bay (*NS* 15 November) contains a number of factual errors, which together with some of the implications create a misleading impression of the situation.

Firstly the article states, correctly, that the mercury levels are nowhere near those at Minamata, but it then goes on to say that levels are increasing all the time. In fact, since the late 1960s there has been a marked decrease in inputs of mercury to the estuary from all sources, and there has been a decline in the mercury levels in both estuarine sediments and fish from Liverpool Bay.

Secondly, ICI at Runcorn achieves 95 per cent removal of mercury from its effluents, not the 80 per cent stated in your article. The plant to achieve this was established in advance of the EEC Mercury Directive and it cost £25m to build and £2m per year to operate. The Environmental Quality Standards laid down under the Directive are being met.

Finally, although the article states that mercury levels are nowhere near those at Minamata, the choice of headline and juxtaposition of inappropriate photographs and subtitles creates a strong impression that we have a potential Minamata situation developing here. The residual traces of mercury leaving the Runcorn mercury removal plant are in the form of highly insoluble inorganic sulphide, whereas the distressing events at Minamata were caused by the direct discharge to the Minamata Bay of toxic organic mercury compounds which were accumulated to a high degree by the fish. These compounds originated in the effluent from a process for the synthesis of acetaldehyde. Such a process has never been operated in the Mersey Catchment, nor is one being operated elsewhere in the UK.

That can't have been me

Geoff Bish, Director for Policy Development, The Labour Party

In the course of his very perceptive article on Labour's economic policy (*NS* 29 November), Peter Kellner suggested that, in a recent paper presented to the National Executive Committee I had 'set my face explicitly against detailed policy making'. Can I put the record straight?

All that the paper suggested is that we should concentrate our research resources, as much as we can, into our work on campaigns. We would therefore have to be extremely careful about our priorities in policy development. We could not, I suggested, work out detailed policies on everything.

Notwithstanding this reservation, we have still managed to commit ourselves — as recommended in the paper — to preparing over 20 new NEC charters (each of which will contain some new policy) a dozen or so consultation documents on specific industries and regions, and at least six major NEC statements for Conference. And all of this to be completed over the next nine months or so. More to the point, given Peter's suggestion that we would *not* be looking at industry policy, the NEC's Jobs and Industry Committee has set up a new working group (chaired by John Prescott) to undertake a major review of our policy on industrial planning.

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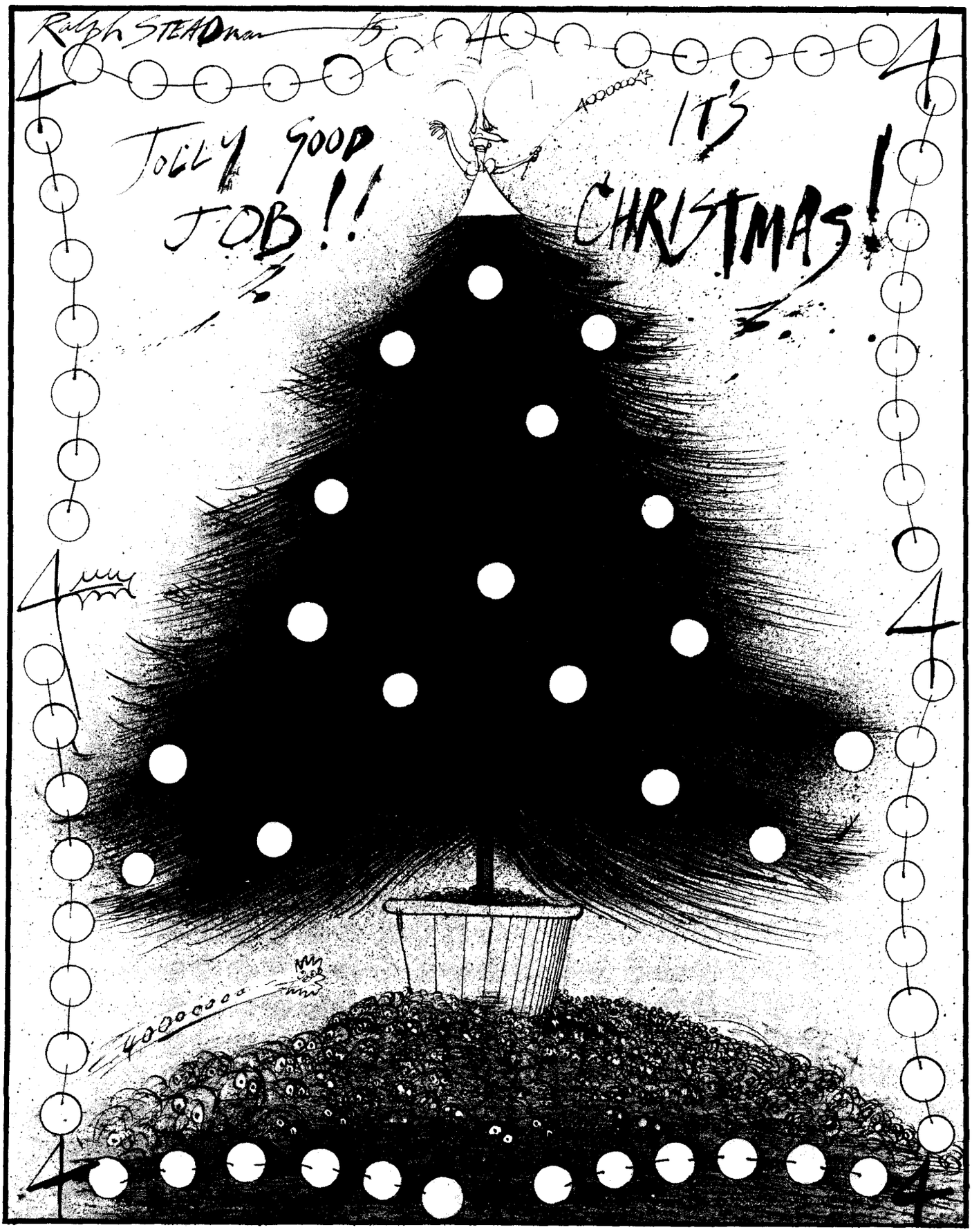

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ISLANDER'S FAREWELL

Wiping the greasepaint from his face as '85 ends, ANTHONY BARNETT, aka 'Islander', looks back on two years as our Diarist — and forward to a renewed socialist culture . . .

AT THE NEW YEAR 'Islander' will be cast into the dungeons of the *New Statesman* and their enfolding silence. As a final act, however, the Editor has allowed me to streak before you and to reflect upon nearly two years of writing a fortnightly diary. It was a period when Ronald Reagan continued his policy of squeezing Nicaragua 'Until they cry "Uncle"'. His own phrase apparently. At home it began with the miners' strike and ended with the ascendency of Neil Kinnock over Labour, as all the while I strove for a politics 'between' Scargill and Kinnock. I'll return to what that means in a moment. First, I'll answer the question that I've been asked most often, and with an up-tightness and suspicion that has always surprised me: why Islander?

Somewhat self-consciously perhaps it suggests neither an 'insider', with all the connotations *that* can have in Britain, nor an 'outsider', sneering malevolently at those same connotations. It was not the choice of name that was resented, however, but the fact of a pen name at all. Some deceitful advantage or tricky cover-up was involved, surely, which no honest socialist could have truck with. One response is that political names have a colourful tradition and add interest to the scene. Why should only *Private Eye* have their advantage? But that in itself is not why I took a pen name. Nor was it so that my authorship should be a secret, certainly I never regarded it as such. Rather it concerns the nature of a diary.

In terms of the national papers, to hold the yellow press card of the NUJ is to have a licence to lie. I would not say that I took that licence so far as to turn my diary into fiction. But the form is certainly theatrical. If one writes about one's gums, the baby, or going to the Edinburgh Festival, not to speak of a word-box, a distinct self-presentation is involved, with heavy make-up, and dramatic compression. It seemed to me easier and more enjoyable if this were explicitly a role, a part that I acted out. This also made it — it would be hypocritical to say more collective — but something that could be shared as I could ask friends for stories 'for Islander'. The distance afforded by playing a part also offered me a protection from becoming too theatrically opinionated myself — a distinct danger!

'What is it like writing in the *Statesperson*?', is the next question. If journalism is theatrical, then it is like going on a stage that faces no auditorium. 'Hello! Is anyone out there? Are you reading me, if only on the bog after a large Xmas input?' You see what I mean: silence. It can be quite unnerving. So the more you want to write well, the more you must follow your own judgement. Sometimes, as you keyboard an article or a diary item it takes a direction that is surprising: one learns one's views literally by working them out. But journalism isn't major literature, and the context — writing for a socialist paper — has a definite effect.

How many share one's concerns by reading the paper? The answer affects the voltage not, I hope, of the computer but of what one writes. And leads on to the question of the popularity, or lack of it, of socialist culture, and so to the whole problem of elitism which dogs the *New Statesman*. Rightly so as the paper's origins lie in Bloomsbury and Fabianism. I think part of the suspicion directed against my use of a pen name comes from the fact that it reproduces a tradition from those times — one that Bruce Page blew away in his whirlwind assault upon *belles lettres*. I supported his iconoclasm. Now, although we have not yet succeeded, I'd argue that socialists need to lay claim to the best qualities of that earlier tradition, from this, the other side of the democratic divide.

LIKE A CONDEMNED MAN trying to compose his final letter, I had thought of listing all the stories I'll not be able to follow up: from the lamentable axing of *Book 4*, to how I will do my bit to quicken the coming crisis by withdrawing my account from the Midland (which, according to Harold Lever and Christopher Huhne's Penguin Special, is the most over-exposed bank in the world in terms of bad Latin American debts — see p. 34), to the *Economist* editorial which said: 'Stopping racial insults in police canteens would help the important task of recruiting many more black policemen'. What is going on exactly in police canteens? However, I don't feel condemned and I'm more interested in using the occasion to consider the re-making of a socialist culture in these countries of our 'United Kingdom'.

It is easy to say that socialist journalism should be at once serious and entertaining, attractive and hard-hitting. The terms fall off the tongue. What they mean when they mean anything is that radical argument should transmit a recognisable anger — one which helps us to laugh at and to be furious with the world we actually live in. This also is much easier said than done. It is odd, though, that there should be so many lamentations about the unpopularity of socialism and the need for it to become realistic and to re-think. Because I doubt if there has ever been a time in British history when socialists have been more lively, far-ranging and unpredictable. Over the last few weeks on television we have been able to watch *The Edge of Darkness* and *The Writing on the Wall*. At the very least, both mini-series have expanded the area of public discussion and experience, to the benefit of the Left. In terms of film, music, magazines, fiction, poetry and organisations, much more is happening now than in the '60s.

Dick Millington

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Jon Davison

The fact that the mood is reflective, and often pessimistic, is a strength.

Yet it is evident that something is missing. Contemporary socialism has not yet found a public voice. It can address its own problems, and a multitude of sectional interests, but it has not managed to address 'the country'. (Or 'the world', which is an even bigger problem; luckily I've no space for it here.) This is true at a much more important level than journalism.

THE MINERS' STRIKE failed to bring down Thatcher because trade unionists were not convinced that it confronted the real issues in a way that was acceptable. We should not doubt that spontaneous solidarity from just some sections of the organised working class, in power stations and factories and on the roads, could have delivered a different verdict during 1984-85. Scargill — I accept this over-personifies, I'm taking the journalistic licence — failed to unite behind him the miners themselves, failed to win a majority for the strike by ballot, and then demanded no closures whatever on economic grounds. It was incredible to thus defy government policy so absolutely in this fashion. When Scargill addressed the nation through television, he was not believable. ▷

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But the pit communities succeeded in representing and communicating values that utterly subverted Thatcherism. Their message *did* carry conviction. They became the first to defeat Thatcher ideologically on her own chosen ground of homely sincerity. Something really important and positive took place off-screen and outside London during the miners' strike. Its defeat may well prove temporary, and the purpose of a socialist movement should be to ensure that it will only be temporary.

For all his origins in a mining community, Neil Kinnock does not express the necessary response. For a year now I have been asking, 'Where is Kinnock's vision?' Islander seems to have got under his skin. Last month the Leader of the Opposition gave 'The Inaugural Lecture of the Fabian Society Autumn Series on "The Future of Socialism"'. This is how it ended:

> We must tap that imagination and those civic virtues which are, in effect, socialism in action — mutual care and mutual aid. It is not sufficient to offer programmes and plans; we must offer vision as well as theory; and, as Tawney said in 1945, 'Put the nation on its mettle'. I have no doubt the country is willing and ready to respond.

Thanks for the offer, but no thanks. 'We must offer vision . . . Put the nation on its mettle . . .'. No, no, no: this is not the way to do it.

Why, after six years, hasn't Thatcher met with much fiercer and more effective riposte? How has she managed to get away with unparalleled industrial destruction, police racism, educational folly, backhanders in Oman, a finance sector riddled with corruption . . . Need I continue? She is the vandal. Yet Parliament cowers before her when she denounces vandalism. I emphasise Parliament, an institution so ashamed of itself that it refuses to be seen on television. Insofar as socialist argument seeks its leadership in parliamentary expression, I think it is almost bound to fail. This brings us back again to the question of language itself, in a political culture suffused by elite traditions formed in an epoch of Empire.

RECENTLY I had a reason to attack what I call the 'mateyism' of the *Mirror*. Mateyism is a populist prose designed to speak on behalf of the reader or, to be more exact, the bloke: 'Watch out wonderful. We say, "Come off it!"'. Again, journalism as theatre, or in this case music hall. It was a very successful and in its time partially emancipating breakthrough from Edwardian stiffness and propriety. But it was also distinctly Labourist, in the sense that it accepted a self-consciously subordinate role. One of the things I've always found a bit pathetic about much of the left press is the way it mimics the 'working class' style pioneered by the *Mirror*. Vanguardist papers, for example, proclaim their permanent contempt for the traitors of the labour movement using the very forms and typographical styles that are the expression of that movement.

To appeal to people as 'ordinary', to help ensure that they think of themselves as *being* 'an ordinary person', is to endorse and reinforce the notion of 'them and us'. A pseudo-jocular, mostly alcoholic, 'fun-loving', tart ogling, bum-pinching, blustering apprehensiveness is the outcome. Despite the *Sun* this England is dying, I'm glad to say, and one of its last homes is the House of Commons. Confirmation of this is the Parliamentary column by Robert Kilroy-Silk in *Time Out*. Written in vile sun-speak its logo consists of 'Kilroy was here' (ged it?) splashed across the parliamentary crest. The combination of graffiti and portcullis is not as audacious as it seems. The two get on well together.

'It is easy to say that socialist journalism should be at once serious and entertaining, attractive and hard-hitting . . .'

Because the art of parliamentary politics is anyway that of the custard pie. The game is in the skill of throw and speed of evasion. Much more than journalism, it is a world of performance, not issues, and certainly not actual policy. Indeed the essence of elite behaviour is that you should never be convinced by your own argument. Its art: 'to get away with it'. Honest reflection is an indulgence reserved for superannuated members of the House of Lords, otherwise to mean what you say in British politics is regarded as a mark of madness. Enoch Powell has it, so does Tony Benn. They have been confined to Westminster's gulag: they may be seers, but they are 'mental'. One politician only has broken out, using her womanhood. Thatcher became Prime Minister because, for all her skill at dissimulation, she is sincere. The advantage it gives her can hardly be over-estimated. People don't even care what she means, at least she *means* it.

In a recent issue (*NS* 6 December 1985) Phillip Whitehead expressed his concern at the failure of the BBC to put up a halfway adequate defence of its role before the Peacock Commission. 'Some anger would be no bad thing', he concluded rather sadly. Why wasn't *he* angry about it? But of course there is little point in working up a rage on behalf of something that has surrendered its own passion to live. If the BBC is incapable of anger, how can you take risks on its behalf? So the question is why can't the BBC express cogent anger about the threats to its continuity as an institution? Because its authentic voice is private, the voice of club-land and manipulation. It is incapable of democratic argument. This, surely, is also the reason for the inability of the so-called 'wets' to make any convincing protest at the dismantling of their world.

A SIMILAR SHAMEFUL incapacity throttles the Left. The institutions themselves defy incorporation into the cause. Parliament, Princess Di, public school barristers, Oxbridge civil-servants — the list goes on and on — our representative institutions are misrepresentations of what we are. To fight for them is undermining and self-defeating. But if we rail against the institutions this too makes us self-evidently ridiculous, condemned in advance to eccentricity.

To give voice to what is happening we must be able to argue for a plausible alternative. Europe offers a sense of air. What is decent about this country may not be asphixiated, thanks in large part to the European Court of Human Rights, for example. I have often used 'Islander' to support the GLC. But from the stories I hear, perhaps its abolition has come just in time to prevent the entrenchment of a new generation of left-wing officialdom with the insufferable arrogance of those who are not even interested to learn how ignorant they are. Young leftists, full of themselves and little else, presume their amateur status ensures that they know best. Attempts to demand skill, training, expertise are denounced as bourgeois, even elitist. In this crude reaction against 'the class system', they ensure we remain its prisoner. The new municipal socialism has demonstrated that energy and imagination abound: what is needed is a greater modesty of purpose that will make learning faster and more effective.

It will help too if we shake off our fear of the modern. My code for this has been computers, and I've really enjoyed taunting *NS* readers by singing the praise of my machine. I hope to upgrade it soon and the Editor has promised that in the Spring I will be allowed one final cry from the dungeons, as I try out the latest software. Until then, adieu. □

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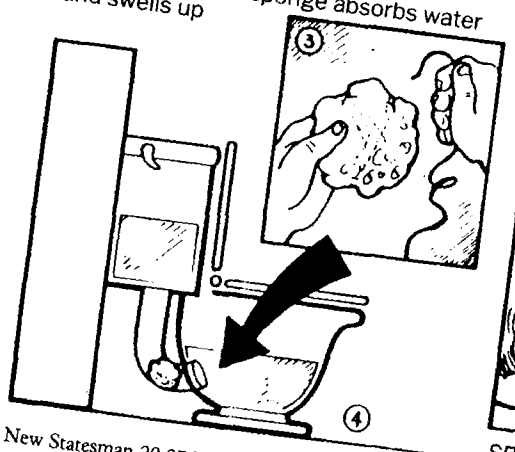
EXCLUSIVE EXTRACTS!

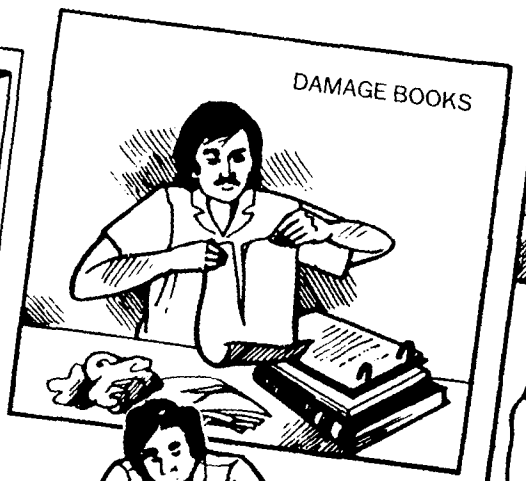
Freedom Fighter's MANUAL

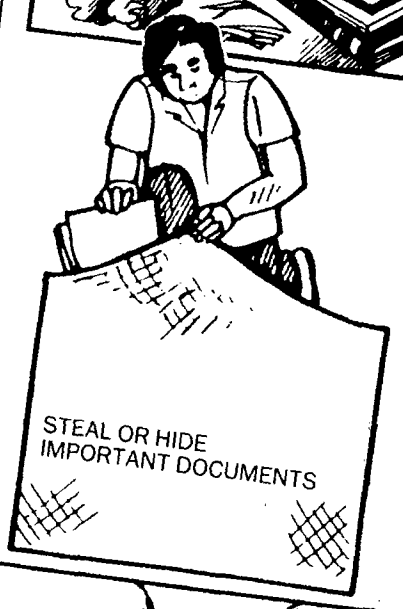
VITAL NEW BOOK!

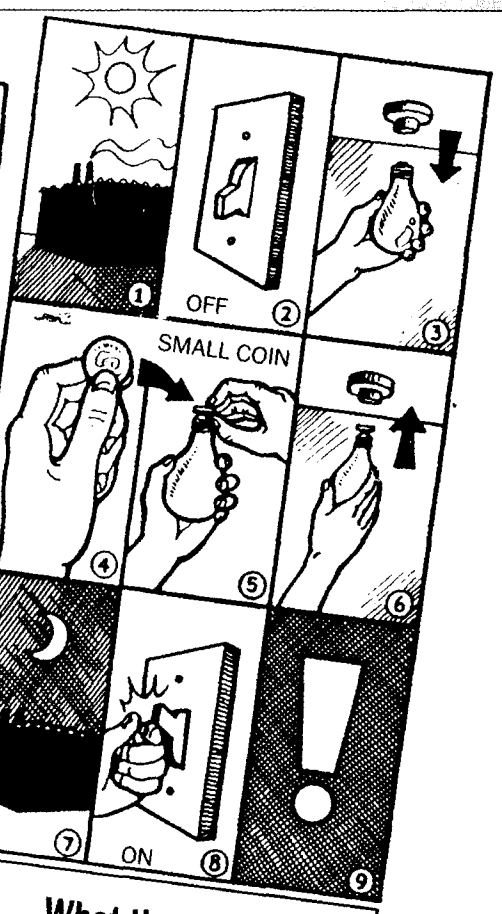
A practical guide to liberating Britain from oppression and misery, by paralysing the military-industrial complex of the fascistic Thatcher state — without special tools, and at minimum personal risk for the freedom fighter.

1. Wet a sponge
2. Tie the sponge tightly and let it dry
3. Remove the string
4. Drop the sponge into WC bowl, blocking it as the sponge absorbs water and swells up









What the free Briton can do to cripple the Thatcher tyranny

Any government depends on an essential economic infrastructure, one which can easily be disabled and even paralysed without arms or costly equipment, drawing minimally on resources and time.

These pages present a series of useful sabotage techniques, the majority of which can be done with simple household tools such as scissors, empty bottles, screwdrivers, matches etc. These measures are extremely safe and without risk for those who use them.

New Statesman 20-27 December 1985

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ADVANCED TECHNIQUES

PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE IN GUERRILLA OPERATIONS

A companion volume to the Freedom Fighter's Manual describes more specialised guerrilla methods, including:

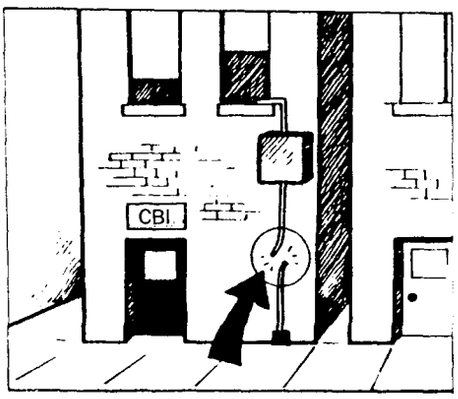
★ Setting up 'Front' organisations . . .

★ Armed Propaganda . . .

★ Implicit and Explicit Terror . . .

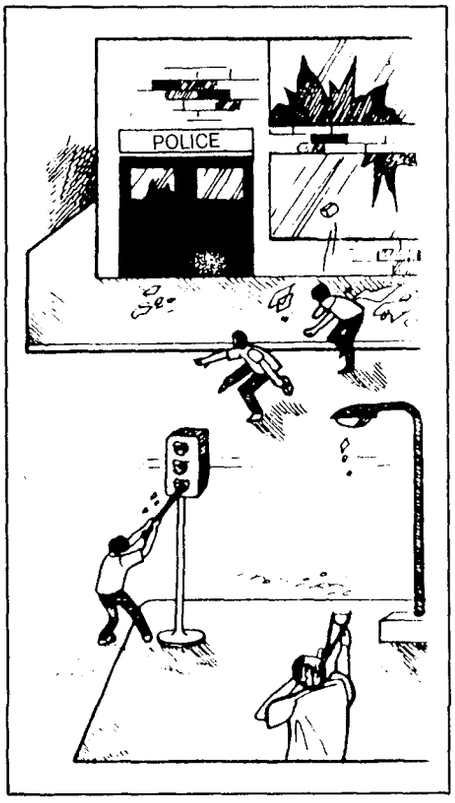
★ Selective use of Violence for propagandistic effects . . .

'It is possible to neutralise carefully selected and planned targets, such as local and high court judges, police and M15 officials, Army chiefs, etc . . . The target should be chosen on the basis of the spontaneous hostility that the majority of the population feels towards the target.'



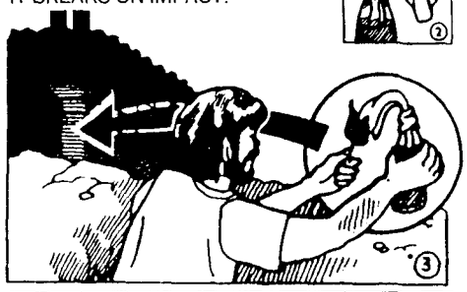
DISCONNECT ALARM SYSTEMS

THREATEN THE BOSS BY TELEPHONE

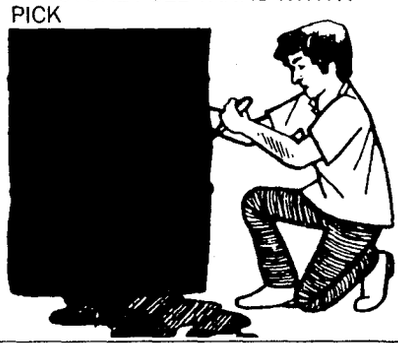


INCENDIARY BOMB OR 'MOLOTOV COCKTAIL'

1. FILL A NARROW NECKED BOTTLE WITH PETROL, PARAFFIN OR FLAMMABLE DIESEL. *ADDING FLAKES OF SOAP OR SAWDUST MAKES IT MORE EFFECTIVE.*
2. PUSH A RAG INTO THE BOTTLE UNTIL IT DIPS INTO THE LIQUID, AND THE OTHER END EXTENDS NO MORE THAN 8 INCHES FROM THE RIM. SEAL THE BOTTLE TIGHTLY WITH STRING OR TAPE.
3. TO USE THE BOMB:
(a) HOLD THE BOTTLE IN ONE HAND WITH YOUR ARM EXTENDED.
(b) LIGHT THE RAG WITH YOUR OTHER HAND.
(c) THROW THE LIGHTED BOTTLE IMMEDIATELY AT THE TARGET. THROW IT SUFFICIENTLY HARD THAT IT BREAKS ON IMPACT.



PUNCTURE FUEL TANKS WITH A PICK



SET FIRE TO THE FUEL WITH A 'MOLOTOV COCKTAIL'

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION: both of these specially written volumes have been published by the Central Intelligence Agency of the United States of America: Langley, Virginia, USA. Their local representatives may be reached at the Political Liaison section, US Embassy, London W1: 01-499 9000.

The original language is Spanish. The target is the democratic government of Nicaragua.

For 'Thatcher', read 'Marxist'. For Britain, read Nicaragua.

A last word from our sponsor. President Reagan told the American Bar Association this July that the community of civilised nations must 'act against the criminal menace of terrorism with the full weight of the law'.

Indeed. Why not start in your own backyard? Nicaragua is the United States' backyard. Isn't it?

Duncan Campbell, Patrick Forbes

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ROGER WODDIS

The Mumblies

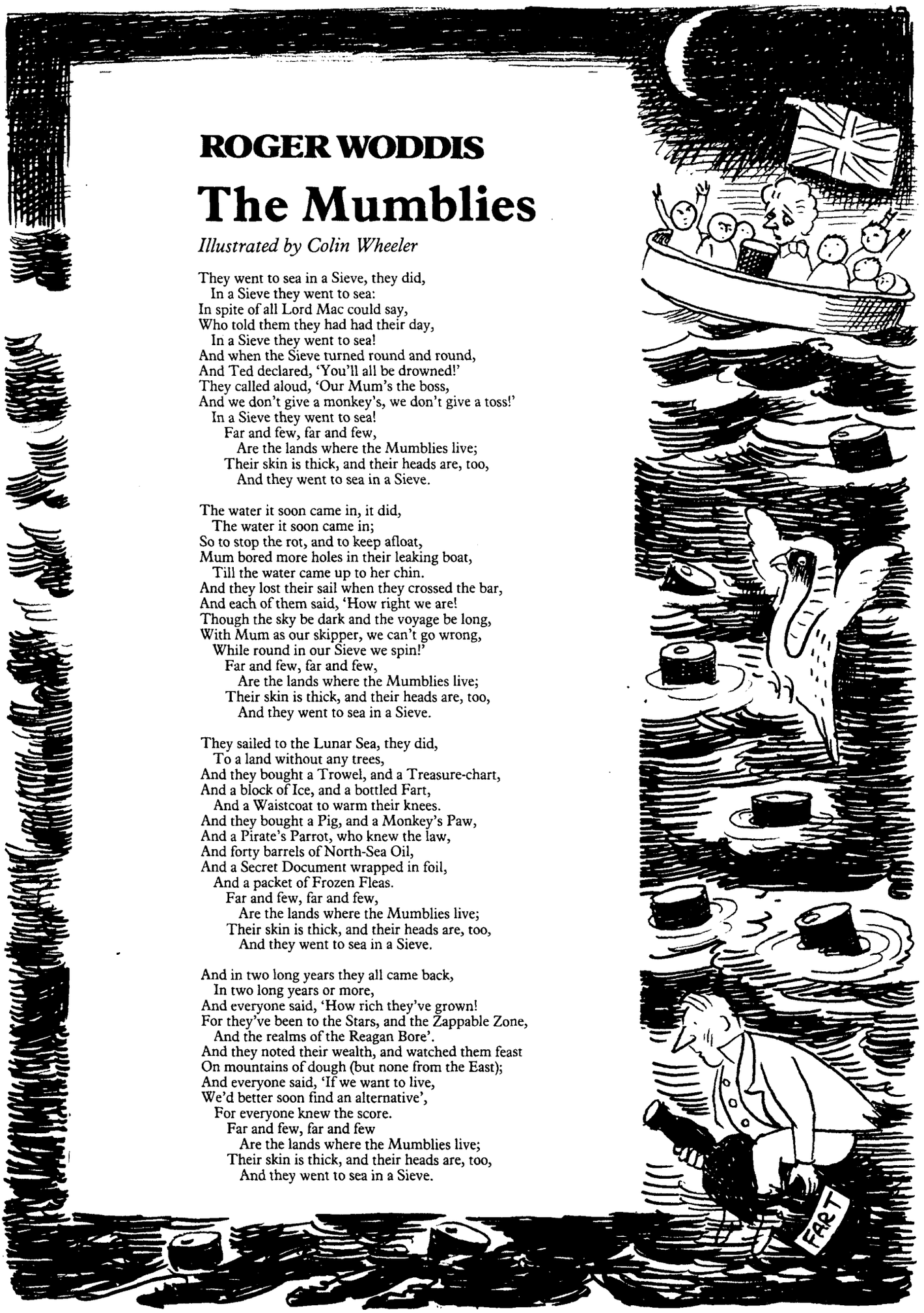
Illustrated by Colin Wheeler

They went to sea in a Sieve, they did,
  In a Sieve they went to sea:
In spite of all Lord Mac could say,
Who told them they had had their day,
  In a Sieve they went to sea!
And when the Sieve turned round and round,
And Ted declared, 'You'll all be drowned!'
They called aloud, 'Our Mum's the boss,
And we don't give a monkey's, we don't give a toss!'
  In a Sieve they went to sea!
    Far and few, far and few,
      Are the lands where the Mumblies live;
    Their skin is thick, and their heads are, too,
      And they went to sea in a Sieve.

The water it soon came in, it did,
  The water it soon came in;
So to stop the rot, and to keep afloat,
Mum bored more holes in their leaking boat,
  Till the water came up to her chin.
And they lost their sail when they crossed the bar,
And each of them said, 'How right we are!
Though the sky be dark and the voyage be long,
With Mum as our skipper, we can't go wrong,
  While round in our Sieve we spin!'
    Far and few, far and few,
      Are the lands where the Mumblies live;
    Their skin is thick, and their heads are, too,
      And they went to sea in a Sieve.

They sailed to the Lunar Sea, they did,
  To a land without any trees,
And they bought a Trowel, and a Treasure-chart,
And a block of Ice, and a bottled Fart,
  And a Waistcoat to warm their knees.
And they bought a Pig, and a Monkey's Paw,
And a Pirate's Parrot, who knew the law,
And forty barrels of North-Sea Oil,
And a Secret Document wrapped in foil,
  And a packet of Frozen Fleas.
    Far and few, far and few,
      Are the lands where the Mumblies live;
    Their skin is thick, and their heads are, too,
      And they went to sea in a Sieve.

And in two long years they all came back,
  In two long years or more,
And everyone said, 'How rich they've grown!
For they've been to the Stars, and the Zappable Zone,
  And the realms of the Reagan Bore'.
And they noted their wealth, and watched them feast
On mountains of dough (but none from the East);
And everyone said, 'If we want to live,
We'd better soon find an alternative',
  For everyone knew the score.
    Far and few, far and few
      Are the lands where the Mumblies live;
    Their skin is thick, and their heads are, too,
      And they went to sea in a Sieve.



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EUROPE – THE HELPLESS AND SILENT CONTINENT

Only socialists, operating on a European scale, can mount effective resistance to the encroaching Americanisation of our lives, argues PETER GLOTZ as he sketches a 'manifesto for the new American Left'

MY THESIS is that today there are new irrefutable arguments for the Europeanisation of our politics. I say this consciously as a Social Democrat — as a member of an often still illusory and certainly not systematically or effectively organised European Left.

I maintain that Europe — whose very continued existence as a political entity will be determined in the next fifteen years — can only be stabilised on the basis of something approaching a common policy *by the Left* — if that can in fact be done at all. The reverse is also true. Social democracy and democratic socialism can *only* be achieved today as European concepts; in national terms these ideals become more illusory and hopeless every day.

What are these new irrefutable arguments for the Europeanisation of our politics? They lie in economics and in culture — in the loss of power of national economic policy due to the rise of transnational financial markets; and the threat to a European identity from the development of the internationally operating 'new media.'

We must take account of the radical loss of power that individual states have experienced in relation to central banks, the international commercial banks, transnational financial markets and multinational companies. I see this as the collapse of one of the central pillars of state sovereignty. I have chosen a symbol for it: nowhere is the decay of the nation state more clearly visible than in the tortured little country of Lebanon. I believe that we now see the 'Lebanonisation' of the economic function of modern industrial states.

In this development lies the virtually inexhaustible source of the loss of the credibility suffered by democratic governments today — whether of the Left or of the Right. In opposition they promise to eliminate unemployment, to cut inflation and to boost economic growth — only to find that in government they can do nothing of the sort. When the former Chancellor Helmut Schmidt repeatedly pointed out that, even if he was entirely free to use *all* the instruments of national economic policy, even then he could control at most 30 per cent of economic activity, he was not overstating reality.

The international concentration of capital and ever increasing economic interdependence, which in the period of prosperity after the Second World War reached hitherto undreamt-of proportions, was the least surprising cause of the declining power of national governments. It was all foreseen by Marx. Today over 4,500 international corporations registered in nine of the EEC member countries control approximately 50,000 enterprises outside their country of origin. The capacity of many of these large corporations to plan and take action is far larger than that of an average national ministry.

'The scope of action open to national governments has not been reduced to zero, but it is painfully small'

Events in financial markets have been even more far reaching and unexpected. In 1944 the United States had created in the Bretton Woods Agreement a wonderful system, tailored to its own interests — which at the same time was beneficial to other capitalist countries.. Forty-four countries decided originally to set up the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. The IMF made it obligatory for the member states to tie their currency to gold or to the US dollar. (It is worth noting that the United States in the late 1940s held approximately 70 per cent of the world's entire gold reserves.) Later came the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), making it difficult for poorer, technologically backward countries to adopt protectionist measures, safeguarding a fairly liberal flow of world trade and making modernisation inevitable.

It was clear under this system who had the dominant say. But there was still some national economic steerageway and some capacity to make reasonable forecasts. In 1973, this system fell apart. The central banks of those countries outside the dollar block had pulled the ripcord and refused to go on buying up Vietnam dollars at a fixed rate of exchange. They wanted to protect their investors and savers by adopting 'national' anti-inflation policies.

The first result of the new regime of 'floating' exchange rates was the transfer of a juicy, thick slice of power from governments to central banks. Secondly, the meteoric expansion of transnational financial markets, free from the control of national central banks, changed the situation completely. The resulting international mobility of capital, acutely sensitive to exchange and interest rates, led not only to credit mountains of loans to developing countries but also to the total destruction of *national Keynesianism.*

The Left must grasp this once and for all. *The minimum return which must be offered to investment-seeking capital — to make productive investments and job creation possible — is less determined today by the policies of individual nation states than ever*

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before. The scope of action open to national governments and central banks has not been reduced to zero, but it is painfully small. An effective economic policy for democratic socialism is now scarcely possible within the empty vessel of the nation state.

THE SECOND INNOVATION that the European Left must work with is the development of modern technology — the growing together of news technology, microelectronics and electronic data processing and the politico-economic forms in which these new technologies will be applied. The satellite technology, the new memory technologies and the fantastic invention of glass-fibre cable, innovations which have been given over to commercial exploitation, have completely changed the boundaries of public life.

If today, in most of Europe, people are receiving three or four television channels — or in other words one can reach the people of Europe by appearing on three or four channels — the next ten years will bring a Babylonian multiplication of voices. Videos, CB radio, new radio stations with special programmes for the most diverse groups, video games, town newspapers instead of the mass circulation press — the information structure is being turned upside down. It remains to be seen which messages and images will penetrate through the complicated channel systems of the future into the heads of European workers.

This constitutes the greatest danger to an independent European culture — or rather European cultures: diverse national cultures as well as everyday culture, democratic mass culture and, to a lesser extent, the representative culture of the bourgeoisie. In the East, decades of cultural dirigism caused the impoverishment of creative forces. In the West there is now an increasing danger that the new mass media corporations will shrivel the classic openness of European society.

The educational movements from the late 19th and early 20th centuries have ebbed. The forces of resistance, particularly working-class resistance, have declined. There is a real risk that new creative forces will no longer find a viable economic basis and will be pushed off into a ghetto called 'alternative' culture. Meanwhile, the consciousness of the masses will be determined by conglomerate enterprises based in America, Australia or elsewhere.

IN THE SPIRIT of this analysis, I shall formulate seven theses for social democracy as a European ideal — and as a European programme.

One. Our old continent still has a contribution to make to world politics: we must absorb, refine and give new life to the developments of the last four hundred years, through Hume and Locke, Kepler, Galileo, Descartes and Kant, in the face of terrible sacrifices. That in turn means that we must not run away from the spirit of rational individualism, especially not now at the start of this new electronic phase of civilisation.

Instead we must push on with the project of modernisation. Europe must take up its past historical development: an enlightened, anti-heroic and unbellicose

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programme, based on a spirit of scientific experiment. This programme could, for example, for the first time in history contain the possibility of equality between the sexes. We must add to it what has been learned from the fruits of the bloody experiences of recent decades: the encounters with destructive growth; with power-conscious international oligarchies; and with the new forms of Caesarism which can arise from economic catastrophes. In short we must develop capitalism — the product of Western rationalism — into *social democracy.*

Two. We must not try in vain to play in the big league, pretending that Europe can be a superpower. It is senseless to challenge the overwhelming superiority enjoyed by the Americans and the Soviets on the battlefield, or their supremacy in space technology.

Yet why cannot Europeans point with pride to the greatest diversity of biological plants, the most colourful book market, the most rational system of old age security? European culture — from Michelangelo through Johann Sebastian Bach to Heinrich Heine, from Fritz Lang to Niels Bohr — has often come from states which were second rate in terms of power politics. Perhaps Europeans should consider one simple point: where we would be if Hitler and his associates had *not* scattered Europe's Jewish culture to the four winds, if Albert Einstein and Paul Lazarsfeld, Leo Löwenthal and Paul Carnap had not been banished from Europe? Europe can be powerful, if it stops thinking of power only in terms of MIRVed rockets — and rouses itself to a new self-confidence.

Three. Europe, even with its history, can only advance from a geographical being to becoming a political concept, if Europeans respect a minimal moral standard — social justice. The attraction that Europe can still generate is the attraction of convincing ways of organising life.

The neo-conservative leading groups of the West European states are handing over Western Europe to American hegemony — not because they are in any sense American 'agents', but because they themselves cannot create an image of a properly functioning European political economy. They try to treat market forces like laws of nature. In doing so, ignoring history, they seek to revert to a period before the development of the European 'social state'. This produces the 'Arthur Scargill effect', — 'why do we need the Americans when we are strong enough to become small and beautiful on our own?'

The last real conservatives bowed out with de Gaulle, Adenauer and Macmillan. The mercantile petty bourgeoisie which today controls the 'conservative' political machinery in Europe — with Margaret Thatcher as its figure-head — is historically sterile and can project no image for the future.

No European 'will to live' can be built on a resurgence of poverty or on broken social contracts. Too many people have died in Europe since 1789 for the *unity* of liberty, equality and fraternity. Those who try today to split this trinity by dropping the goal of equality are casting themselves into social trench warfare.

Four. The powers of old Europe will lose even their third and fourth roles in world politics if they fail to build an industrial Europe. If they want to enter the fields of micro-electronics, telecommunications and bio-technology, not just as consumers but also as producers, then Europeans must build up a common scientific research programme and a common industrial policy.

There are also risks in the supply of energy and of raw materials which one country cannot carry on its own. The first step to a supra-national organisation for a scientific and industrial Europe must come from the European Community. If that fails, practically any other configuration, which leads to supranational institutions, structural decisions and external tariff barriers, is better than the demagogic helplessness of ineffectual EEC summit conferences.

Five. Europe will only succeed in playing a more self-confident role if it creates a new partnership between East and West Europe. This partnership must be based on the guarantee of existing borders, *without any ifs and buts* — giving up any idea of re-establishing capitalism in East Europe, but at the same time understanding that those peoples have not stopped striving for dignity and freedom.

Aggressive foreign policies à la Reagan and Weinberger which have sacrificed all sensitivity towards the interests of the old continent in the name of a new American self-assertiveness, are anti-European — if only because they deprive East European states in the Soviet fold of room to manoeuvre. We need a *second* Ostpolitik, which first gives Europe a breathing space by reducing arms costs in East and West. This second Ostpolitik must operate on the basis of the Western alliance but must not try to destroy or dismember the Eastern alliance. Instead it must try to change *both* existing alliances.

No doubt there are already some cautious takers for such a policy in the Communist Parties of the East European states. But a second Ostpolitik of this kind can only start in Western Europe. It must not interrupt the ideological debate with Communism, but equally it must not put ideology in the place of politics.

One thing is now clear. Many East European countries are gaining in political autonomy. Relations between the two Germanies show this particularly clearly.

Above all, a new form of cultural self-assertion is developing in Western and Eastern European societies to the point of aggressive disassociation from their 'respective superpower'. 'The flat map of Europe on the wall is once again becoming a relief map', Willi Brandt has said. Our task is to transform this subconscious cultural trend into a conscious policy.

Six. The key question is this: can the European Left — fragmented though it may be — overcome the spiritual and moral suffocation from which we suffer? Can it free itself from the tragic memory that to date it has not proved possible to realise democracy and strict socialism together? Can it overcome the prejudices against the 'dangerous' vision of the entrepreneur and the process of creative destruction which he unleashes with new ideas and products? Can it at the same time commit capitalism, which is certainly not on its last legs, to *new investment models, to a strategy of qualitative growth and to some kind of ecological bookkeeping?*

Can it overcome the old laager mentality and make itself ready for new alliances — with both new social movements and with key elements amongst efficient European producers and investors? Can it generate a new wave of prosperity, a new set of goals and a new pattern which can break the long cycle of economic stagnation and under-employment in which we are caught?

Seven. Europe can only become a viable political force, if the European Left and its allies take on board the great historical lessons of recent decades. Will we have the nerve to learn as much from the failure of the socialism of Salvador Allende's 'frontal-attack' as from the salvoes fired by Soviet, Hungarian, German and Bulgarian tanks in Prague in 1968 and from the compromises between General Jaruzelski and the Catholic Church in Poland today?

Will we have the decency to suppress any urge to say to the suffering victims 'I told you so', but still to go our own political way? Will we be strong enough to embrace a policy likely to win the youth of Europe — a policy that is without illusions and does not deny the existence of real contradictions, which is not afraid to break with the past.

The answer is by no means clear. The only certainty is that Europe is currently a helpless and silent continent, with neither a social vision nor a historical mission. A sleeping giant, but a giant that shrinks as it sleeps. □

Peter Glotz is general secretary of the West German socialist party, the SPD, and a member of the federal parliament. This article is an edited version of extracts from a speech he made last summer. He has expanded its themes in a book, Manifest für eine Neue Europäische Linke *published this autumn by the Siedler Verlag.*

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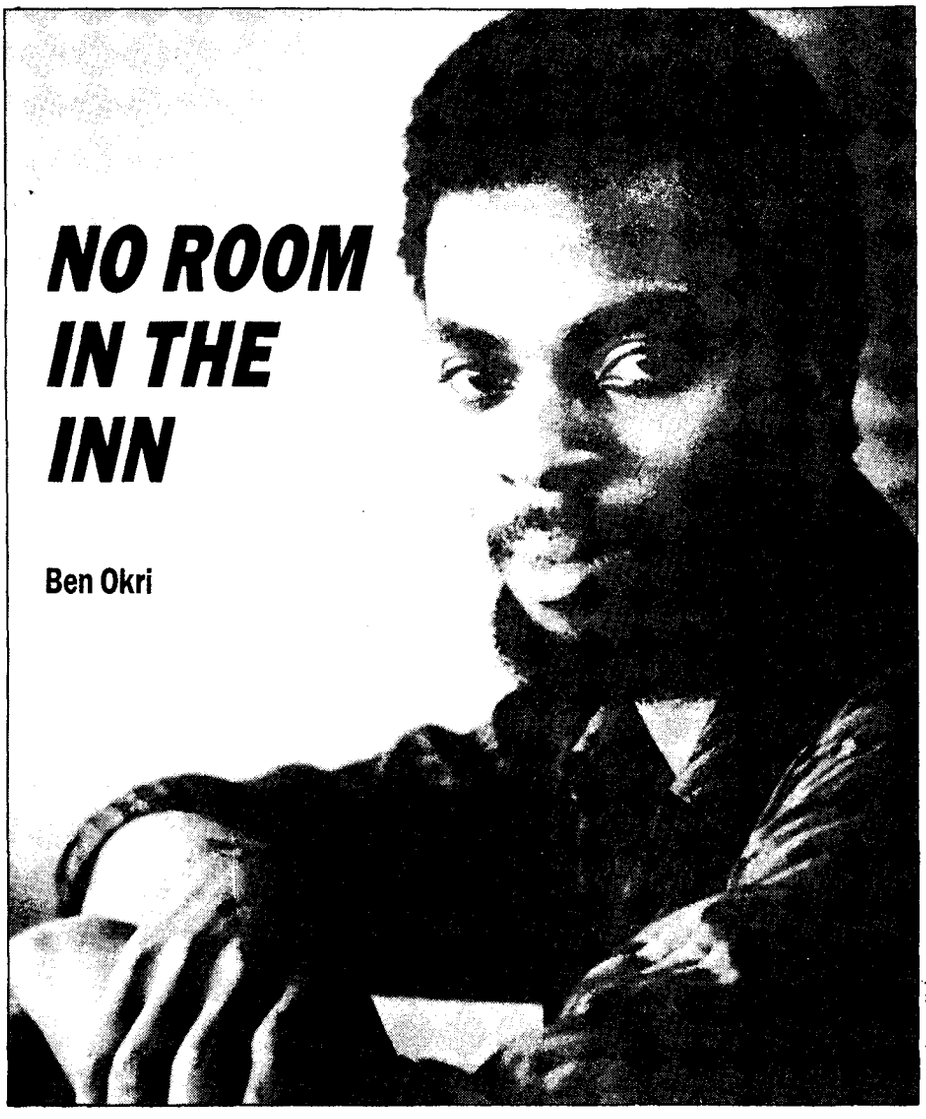
NO ROOM IN THE INN

Ben Okri



Sunmi Smart Cole

I DISLIKE Christmas. It is merely a commercial season, whose flood is calculated to create bank robbers. It is the period to spend now and visit your bank manager in January, and in which we try to make up for the lovelessness of the whole year. It is an unwelcome invasion. I go underground and wait for it to pass away.

MY MEMORY of Christmases has become haphazard: I suspect I have trained myself to forget them. My first one in England was spent among relatives. Terrible changes were taking place in their lives. My uncle's illness, which was later to lead to his death, overshadowed the period. The children had tasted deeply of desolation before they had even entered their adolescence. The house was very decrepit and cold. We were the only ones left in the street, which was full of rubbish and in which only one lamp functioned. When we looked out of the window we saw only impersonal tower blocks in the mist.

The children's faces made me sad because of the restrained joy with which they received their gifts. I had been in England three months and on the faces of my uncle, his wives and children, I beheld the spectre of loneliness. It was made especially poignant by the knowlege that in Africa that day would have been full of the children's masquerade dances, visits to endless relatives, an abundance of food, laughter and song. At home Christmas is exterior: everyone celebrates with everyone else and even strangers become part of the extended family of the season.

By the following year I had left my uncle's place and was living in a bedsit in Plumstead. On Christmas Eve I went to an acquaintance's party. I found it difficult to talk to anyone for the embarrassment my presence seemed to occasion. Shortly before midnight I left in order to catch the last bus home. The bus did not turn up and I nearly froze to death. The houses around were quiet. It seemed the whole of London had nothing to celebrate that year. I gave up on waiting for the bus and took to walking the three miles home. That night was my first lesson in the fact that no one risks giving a lift to a person of colour.

I walked through the silent streets and passed the houses in which the only signs of life were Christmas trees at the windows. I was half way home when it began to snow — my first white Christmas. The flakes drifted down and melted on my skin. Out in the open, away from the frustrations of an English party, surrounded by snow on the uncelebrating houses, a sudden moment of joy burst on me and I was happy in a childish way and my heart was filled with the blood of dreaming. When I got home I was numb: the joy had been spent in the walking and Christmas day was passed with Ritz crackers and soft drinks and the company of a neighbour who cleared his throat for a long minute before speaking.

The next Christmas I remember was at University. Almost everyone had gone home to their families, including my girlfriend of the time, who would have loved me to spend the period with her family but was certain they would suffer greatly from the shock. That was a black and white Christmas. The only students left on campus were some Chinese students, who kept to themselves, and some rebellious undergraduates who had become alienated from family. There was an anarchist, two communists, a Spanish existentialist and a Christian. I think it was the existentialist who invited the rest of us up to spend Christmas together. It was an evening of unfathomable gloom. Our conversation seemed to dwell exclusively on suicide that night. Then the Christian talked about Christ. Then the anarchist said, with astounding confidence, that God was dead. A hush fell on us. The Spanish existentialist wanted to know where God was buried and didn't finish his question because his acid trip had caught up on him and he suddenly began to scream that red spiders were coming out of our eyes. We were all on the fourteenth floor of a tower block and it became rather terrifying, so I slipped away.

Anyone who knows Wivenhoe Park will be familiar with the tower blocks and the echoing podium. Going back to my room through the empty campus gave me the distinct feeling of being on an alien planet. The tower blocks were like monstrous spaceships that had just arrived from a waterless planet.

In my room it was quiet except for the erratic lift which had taken to operating itself. There was no music in the room. I put the light off and stared over Wivenhoe Park. A strong wind was blowing and it whistled through the hundred window crevices of the tower. My thoughts were sad and sweet, like night-time over the Atlantic. I thought of the great wide world and fell asleep on the chair. I woke up and saw a scene from Joyce's story, 'The Dead'. Outside the window snow was falling over Colchester. It fell on the undulating landscape and the isolated shipyard. It fell on the sleeping houses of the wicked and the quick, the hungry and the over-fed. Illuminating itself, it fell through the black night of absorbent stillness. Years later Christmas would involve homelessness and the bitter smell of tramps. But that night the snow didn't fall on me. □

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THE DEBTOR'S REVENGE

It's always been there as a threat in the background but no one seemed to believe it would happen. Now it looks like 1986 could be the year when the Third World nations with huge burdens of debt say 'Can't pay, won't pay'. But there is *a way out of the debt crisis, if only the Western banks and governments would take up the challenge. CHRISTOPHER HUHNE throws down the gauntlet*

IT HAS BEEN a worrying year for the international banking community and for the policy-makers who watch over it. 1986 promises to be worse.

Peru's new President Alan Garcia announced that his country would not commit more than 10 per cent of its export earnings to servicing its debt. There were periodic rumbles from Argentina and a declaration by the newly elected government in Brazil that it would simply not accept the conditions demanded of it by the International Monetary Fund. Mexico suffered from an earthquake; and Colombia from a volcano. Even white South Africa was forced to suspend its debt repayments setting an interesting example and precedent to more hard pressed Third World debtors.

It was in reaction to these signs of rapidly mounting crisis that the new United States Treasury Secretary James Baker finally unveiled 'a plan' in October at the IMF's annual meeting in Seoul, South Korea. Mr Baker's ideas do not measure up to the scale of the problem, the degree of risk, or the costs which current financial arrangements impose on the world economy. They nevertheless represent some intellectual advance from the arid orthodoxy of the previous Reagan-Thatcher consensus. (The British Treasury, which appears totally inert as far as fresh international monetary thinking is concerned, stepped obediently into line behind Baker.)

Until the meeting in Seoul, the American view was that the debt problem could be handled by the IMF's 'case by case' approach and by the application of health-giving dollops of the free market. By proposing half a solution, Baker has now made it very difficult for himself not to come up with something which will ultimately reconcile the widely disparate interests of Third World debtors and their currently scared bankers. He is now inescapably on the escalator to more radical proposals to meet the crisis.

The Baker plan envisages providing new money worth about $10 billion a year for three years to the fifteen most problematic Third World debtors (including Mexico, Brazil, Argentina and Venezuela). A third of the cash is meant to come from official institutions like the World Bank, so we can assume (God and the US Congress willing)

The State of the problem

US and UK banks' outstanding exposure in Mexico, Brazil, Argentina and Venezuela as a proportion of their capital at the end of 1984

	%
BRITISH BANKS	
National Westminster	73
Barclays	62
Lloyds	165
Midland	205
AMERICAN BANKS	
Citicorp	140
BankAmerica	122
Chase Manhattan	142
Manufacturers Hanover	173
J.P. Morgan	103
Chemical	134
Bankers Trust	114
First Chicago	103

From poor to rich

IMF projections 1985 ($ billion)

	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1988	1990
ALL INDEBTED DEVELOPING COUNTRIES (123)							
Total debt	747.0	790.7	827.7	865.3	896.5	986.2	1,089.9
Interest (A)	72.3	67.4	71.0	74.0	72.5	83.5	87.0
Net new borrowing (B)	86.5	43.7	37.0	37.6	31.2	45.9	53.0
Transfer (B – A)	14.2	−23.7	−34.0	−36.4	−41.3	−37.6	−34.0

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that it will actually materialise. The larger part, however, is meant to come from private banks which are already hideously over-exposed to the debtors, and which have been unwilling, since 1982, voluntarily to stump up more lending to offset the huge interest payments on previous loans that are now having to flow back to creditor countries.

Despite a good deal of arm twisting by Baker and others, the commercial banks are far from enthusiastic. Their *collective* interest may well lie in extending new money to minimise the risk of a default on the interest payments on the old debt but each of their *individual* interests continues to lie in a reduction in their lending exposure in the Third World. The banks want out.

THE SECOND WEAKNESS of the Baker plan is that *even if* the banks were to lend new money of the scale Baker is suggesting the sums of money involved are wholly inadequate to the task. They would, even at the most generous estimate, go only a quarter of the way to offset the predicted

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$30-$40 billion a year scheduled flows back from the major Third World debtors to their richer creditors. It is this net transfer from the poor to the rich — the excess of interest payments over new lending — which is at the heart of the debt crisis.

While these enormous net transfers persist the incentive for debtor countries gradually to go the way of Peru will mount inexorably. Default is only too plausible an option — and a default by just the four leading Latin American debtors alone would render all nine of the biggest American banks and two of the biggest British banks insolvent at a stroke. Their own equity and other capital would be wiped out in providing for the bad debts.

Several factors have so far acted to restrain the debtors from outright default, but most of them look as if they are waning. Perhaps the most important has been the fear that, as a result of their loss of credit worthiness, they would immediately lose the trade credits that they need to bridge the period between having to pay for their imports on the nail and the time when they receive payment for their exports. The loss of these credits would force an immediate and devastating cutback in imports which would be even worse than the IMF's so called cures.

But there are ways in which the major debtors are able, with time, to circumvent this constraint. They have been building up their own official reserves of foreign currency. They have built up stocks and substituted domestic goods for imports. They have signed barter deals — for example, swapping Brazilian cars for Nigerian oil. Only the final restraining factor remains in force, which is the hope that Western governments will wake up in time to a realisation of the stresses which they are imposing on what are, in many cases, emergent democracies. The Baker proposals have helped to revive such hopes, but time really is running out.

Latin American output per head dropped by 9 per cent between 1981 and 1984, a decline which makes the 1979-81 recession in this country look like a positive boom. Certainly the growth of Latin American output has gradually resumed, though at historically low rates. But relatively high rates of economic growth are needed just to stabilise living standards because a part of any increase in output has to go in exports to earn the foreign currency for servicing debt and because Latin America's population is growing annually by nearly $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.

Even the growth that there has been is fragile, because it has been highly dependent on the buoyancy of the American market, which absorbed 87 per cent of the rise in Latin American exports between 1982 and 1984. As the United States economy slows down and redresses its enormous present trade deficit, the ability of the Latin American debtors to earn trade surpluses and grow will inevitably be impaired.

NOT EVEN the bankers believe that this game can go on. Unlike lending to someone in their own country, they have no realistic legal recourse if a 'sovereign' debtor decides to default. The idea that assets might be seized is a mirage. Nor are State sanctions against defaulting debtors any more realistic than they were in the 1930s, when the Americans were reluctant to penalise Brazil for fear of increasing German influence. Default would clearly provide immediate foreign exchange gains for the major debtors and would allow them to import more and hence grow more quickly.

We have this point on no less an authority than the Prime Minister herself, who once gave a revealing parliamentary answer to the then Labour leader Michael Foot when he pressed for an assurance that new loans going to Argentina would not be used to buy armaments. 'The alternative', Mrs Thatcher said, 'is that the Argentine may default. If a country defaults on all its past debts, more money is released for the payment of future arms than would have been the case if she was held to repay her debts of the past. That is obvious.'

One serious default would encourage another and it would take only the default of the four biggest Latin American debtors to provoke an international financial crisis on the scale of 1929-31. However such central bankers may attempt to calm public nervousness, the truth is that the consequences of any widespread default would be devastating for the international banking system and the world economy.

Although the collapse of the Continental Illinois Bank in 1984 was handled smoothly, it cannot be assumed that an altogether bigger crisis could be.

British based banks alone have taken deposits in foreign currencies worth more than $500 billion, yet the foreign exchange reserves at the Bank of England on which it could immediately draw to meet a depositor panic amount to only $16 billion. The Federal Reserve Board of the United States would have to stand behind the entire world banking system, yet no international loans have ever been made on the scale which might be required.

Nor would the crisis merely affect the banks directly involved in the lending, for most banks lend to each other through the inter-bank market. Unsure of the banks, businesses would not know whose credit could be trusted, or whose orders to fill. The banks themselves would be forced to cut back their lending as their capital was absorbed in loan losses.

The risks involved in the debt crisis hardly bear thinking about, but one of the ironies of the present situation is that it also exacts continuing costs. The debtors themselves are clearly worse off. But their effort to make net transfers back to the creditors in the only way they can — through the generation of trade surpluses to earn foreign exchange — actually imposes costs on the creditor countries too. The debtors can only earn surpluses by depressing their imports, which cuts demand for developed country goods and by taking a larger share of developed country markets.

A Federal Reserve Bank of New York study has estimated that merely the loss of American exports to Latin America between 1981 and 1983 cost a quarter of a million jobs. As Keynes first pointed out in the context of German war reparations after the First World War, the world economy is not a 'zero-sum' game in which one person wins what another loses.

The effort to generate trade surpluses imposes its greatest cost on the debtors, but no country has gained. Unemployment is higher in the industrial countries as a result. There is also a long term price to pay in the erosion of a relatively liberal world trading system. The enormous pressure on the debtors to export more has inevitably led to pressure from industries in developed countries for greater protection against the new competition. On the one hand, Western governments have extolled the virtues of continuing to service debt. On the other, they have attempted to deprive the debtors of their only means of doing so.

Any long-term solution to the debt crisis should recognise that the burden of default must be shared three ways amongst the debtors, developed country governments and the bankers. Western governments steadily encouraged the bank lending to the Third World during the 1970s since it allowed the debtor countries to sustain their oil imports despite the OPEC price rises and hence to avoid a more severe economic and trade recession.

For other debtors, it allowed a rapid build-up in oil production. What was wrong was not the lending *per se*, but the manner in which essentially *public* purposes were fulfilled by the *private* banks without explicit controls and guarantees. Mr Baker's proposals are a step towards a solution which must eliminate the perverse and iniquitous anomaly of enormous cash transfer being demanded from the relatively poor to the rich.

At the same time the banks will have to be persuaded to write off outstanding debt. A potent mixture of fear and encroaching common sense is goading policy-makers into action. The question for 1986 is whether it will be too little and too late. □

Christopher Huhne is co-author with Harold Lever (Lord Lever of Manchester) of Debt and Danger: the world financial crisis, *Penguin Special, £2.95.*

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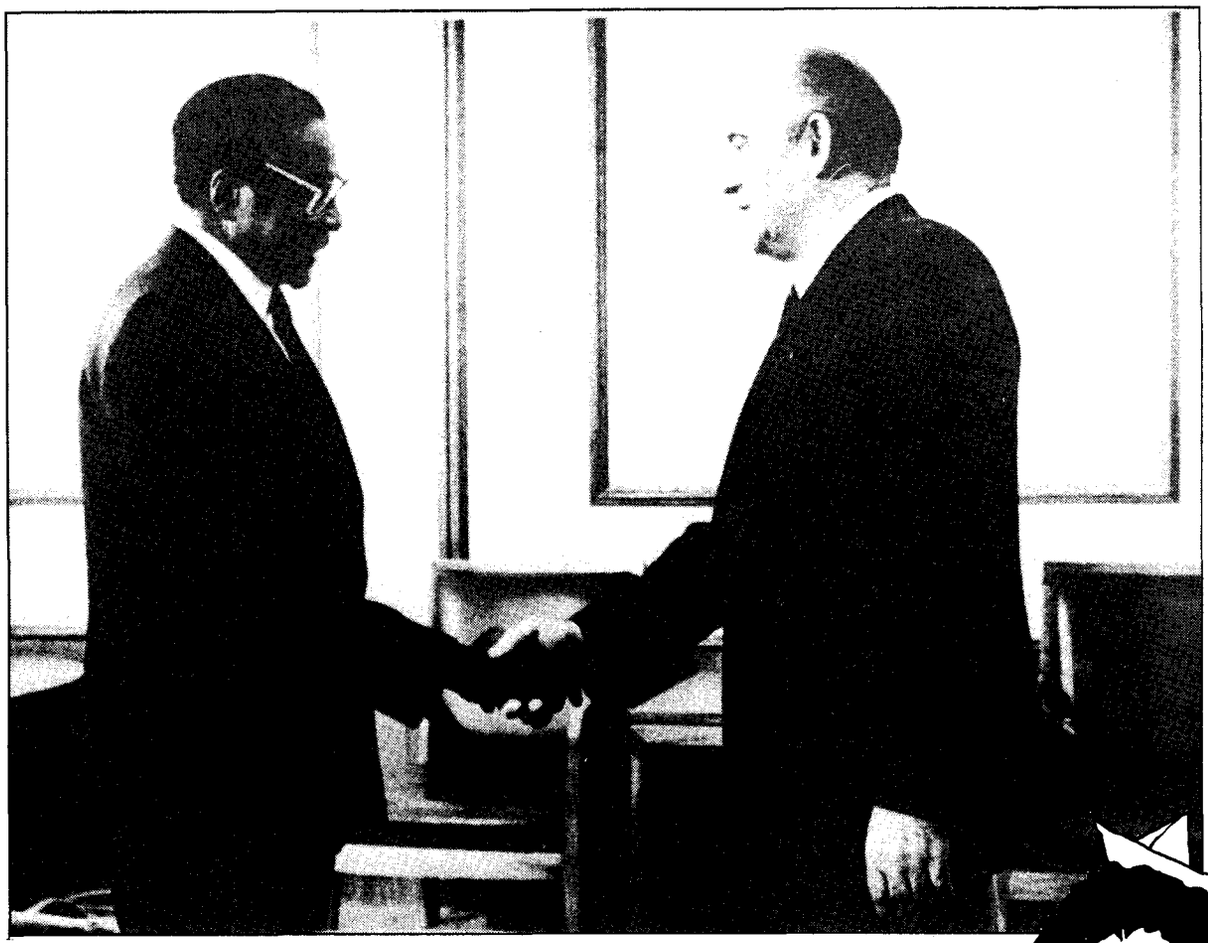

AP

Gorbachev meets Mugabe in December '85 — does this betoken a new Soviet willingness to support the forces hostile to apartheid?

FIRESIDE CHAT THAT DOUSED THE 3RD WORLD

The agenda at the Reagan-Gorbachev summit this year had a fourth plank no one paid attention to. FRED HALLIDAY on the Third World, the item on which the two sides are 'so far apart, there's no room for meaningful compromise'

NOT MANY PEOPLE KNOW this, but the Third World was one of the four main areas of discussion at the Reagan-Gorbachev summit. The other three were arms, human rights and 'bilateral issues' (trade and cultural exchange). It appears that the Third World was the subject on which least progress was made.

This was surprising because only a few weeks earlier Reagan had, in a speech to the United Nations, put greatest emphasis upon what he termed 'regional trouble spots' and had listed five countries in which he was going to press for a reversal of Soviet policy: Cambodia, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Angola and Nicaragua.

For their part, the Russians have for a long time been denouncing US 'imperialist banditry' throughout the Third World.

Afghanistan did come up at Geneva, and the Americans purport to have seen some evidence of Soviet willingness to negotiate. In fact, the Soviet position has changed little, since they have always been keen to discuss a withdrawal of Soviet combat troops, provided external intervention, by Pakistan, the US and China, ceases. There was apparently nothing new in what they said at Geneva. On their side, the Americans are stepping up their aid to the Afghan opposition, and post-summit reports reveal that the figure for aid in 1985 is not $250 million, as previously reported, but $450 million.

Why should the Third World have figured so little in discussions by the fireside and across the green baize table? One reason is the simple fact that the two sides are so far

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apart that there is no room for meaningful compromise. Another is that, for the time being at least, the Third World is strategically stable. The spate of Third World revolutions in the years 1974-80, 14 successful ones in all, did a lot to revive the cold war belligerency in the US that swept Reagan into office. But since 1980 the Third World has been comparatively stable: the only events have been the recapture by the US of Grenada, and the overthrow of a pro-US client by a popular uprising in the Sudan.

Yet Gorbachev knows as well as anyone that the Third World remains central to East-West relations. First, both Russians and Americans remember that the most dangerous moments in the nuclear relationship have been during Third World crises — the Korean war, the Cuba missile crisis of 1962, the Arab-Israeli war of 1973. It is Third World conflict that exacerbates and inflames nuclear competition and makes the 'military balance' an especially contentious issue.

Secondly, the Third World remains the area in which the two sides are actively competing for influence in a way that they cannot in Europe. After the revolutionary gains of the late 1970s, the USSR now faces the 'Reagan Doctrine', the campaign by the US not just to prevent further revolutions, but to undermine, harass and eventually reverse those revolutions that have come to power. Economic blockades, media campaigns, and, above all, guerrilla operations are the three ways in which this policy is being implemented.

The US is actively supporting counter-revolutionary guerrillas in Nicaragua, Angola, Afghanistan and Cambodia (four of the five countries listed by Reagan for 'reversal'), and is using economic influence to put pressure on many more Soviet allies in the Third World. The post-1980 strategic stalemate in the Third World has not impeded the intense rivalry of East and West.

IF THE USSR cannot ignore the Third World, its attitude is rather different from that of one or two decades ago. Soviet optimism about the Third World, epitomised in Khrushchev's support for Egypt under Nasser, has given way to a more sober, cautious assessment of the possibilities of social progress and the reliability of Third World allies.

The defection of countries like Egypt and Somalia has made Moscow prudent in new commitments to radical nationalist regimes. The USSR is also short of the requirements of a large-scale foreign aid programme:— hard currency, food, consumer goods. Since the early '70s the difficulties experienced in their social and economic development by radical Third World states — and the factionalism of many of their ruling parties — has made Soviet officials much less keen to predict transitions to socialism.

Gorbachev has inherited this more restrained outlook. The great majority of Soviet economic aid to the Third World goes to the six countries ruled by pro-Soviet communist parties — Mongolia, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Afghanistan and Cuba. Soviet leaders have time and again stressed that economic aid to the non-communist radical states, the 'states of socialist orientation', will be limited and they must look elsewhere for most of the aid they need.

Gorbachev must know too that, in contrast to Western alarmism about Soviet influence in the Third World, the number of states that are firm allies of the USSR is small indeed. In last month's United Nations vote on Afghanistan, only 10 Third World states, out of more than 100, voted with the USSR.

'Soviet officials are much less keen to predict transitions to socialism'

Faced with this situation of relative Soviet weakness in East-West terms, and of a Third World beset by intractable long-term socio-economic problems, Gorbachev appears to have drawn up a set of clear, realistic, priorities. The first of these is to prevent Third World allies from starting major confrontations with the US. Stalin's experience with Kim Il-sung, who dragged him into the Korean war, and Brezhnev's with Nasser and Sadat, must make this danger ever-present. In private, Soviet officials complain that Third World states underestimate the dangers of nuclear war and are prone to rash, adventurist initiatives. Libya's Colonel Qadafy must be a prime concern in this regard.

A second goal is to consolidate, to hold onto the allies they have in the face of the Reagan Doctrine. It is significant that in the months before the summit, Soviet-armed states in the Third World that were facing guerrilla harassment all went on the military offensive: in Cambodia, there was the largest-ever dry season offensive against the Khmers Rouges and others; in Afghanistan, Soviet and Afghan forces began to operate systematically in border areas; in Ethiopia, the Eritrean guerrillas lost the town of Barentu and part of the border was closed as Ethiopia also began negotiations with Sudan on mutual non-interference; in Angola and Mozambique government forces went on the offensive against UNITA and the MNR respectively; in Nicaragua, the *contras* began, for the first time, to meet helicopter gunships. None of these military campaigns was decisive, but they betokened a new firmness. In Angola, where South Africa then counter-attacked, a much higher level of Soviet military aid has since been supplied.

THIS CONSOLIDATION of existing allies also involves political changes. The Russians have not been able to control Third World revolutionary parties as they once did those in Eastern Europe. It was factionalism in the Afghan party that, to a considerable extent, contributed to the crisis there in 1978-9 that brought in Soviet troops. It was precisely an avoidable split in the leadership of the New Jewel Movement in Grenada that opened the door to Reagan in 1983. Soviet exasperation with the Ethiopians has long focused on factionalism within the regime there.

As little as most of their Third World allies listen to them, the Russians continue to enjoin unity and caution upon them: these are virtues in which the Nicaraguans must score higher than most in Soviet estimation. In South Yemen the ruling Yemeni Socialist Party has just held a Congress in which representatives of two losing factions in earlier leadership disputes have been brought back into the Central Committee, in an attempt to put conflicts to rest. The USSR encouraged this reconciliation process.

Another of Gorbachev's goals is to turn Soviet foreign policy towards China, Western Europe and the non-aligned states. He cannot do what Carter tried to do for the US in his first two years in office, and reorient Soviet policy away from the 'unhealthy obsession' with the other great power; but he can actively pursue new opportunities. Gorbachev has stressed that the USSR wants to develop relations 'with large and small states', and one of the key new appointees in the Central Commitee Secretariat, Nikolai Yakovlev, is known to favour better relations with Western Europe, and downplaying the significance attached to US-Soviet ties.

The Soviet Union has also begun to take a more active interest in southern Africa. The Soviet stance remains extremely cautious there, and reports in the *Observer* a few weeks ago, that Cuba was going to declare war on South Africa, had all the ring of disinformation, coming as they did on the eve of US Congressional discussion of increased aid to UNITA. But the increased military aid to Angola, and the presence of

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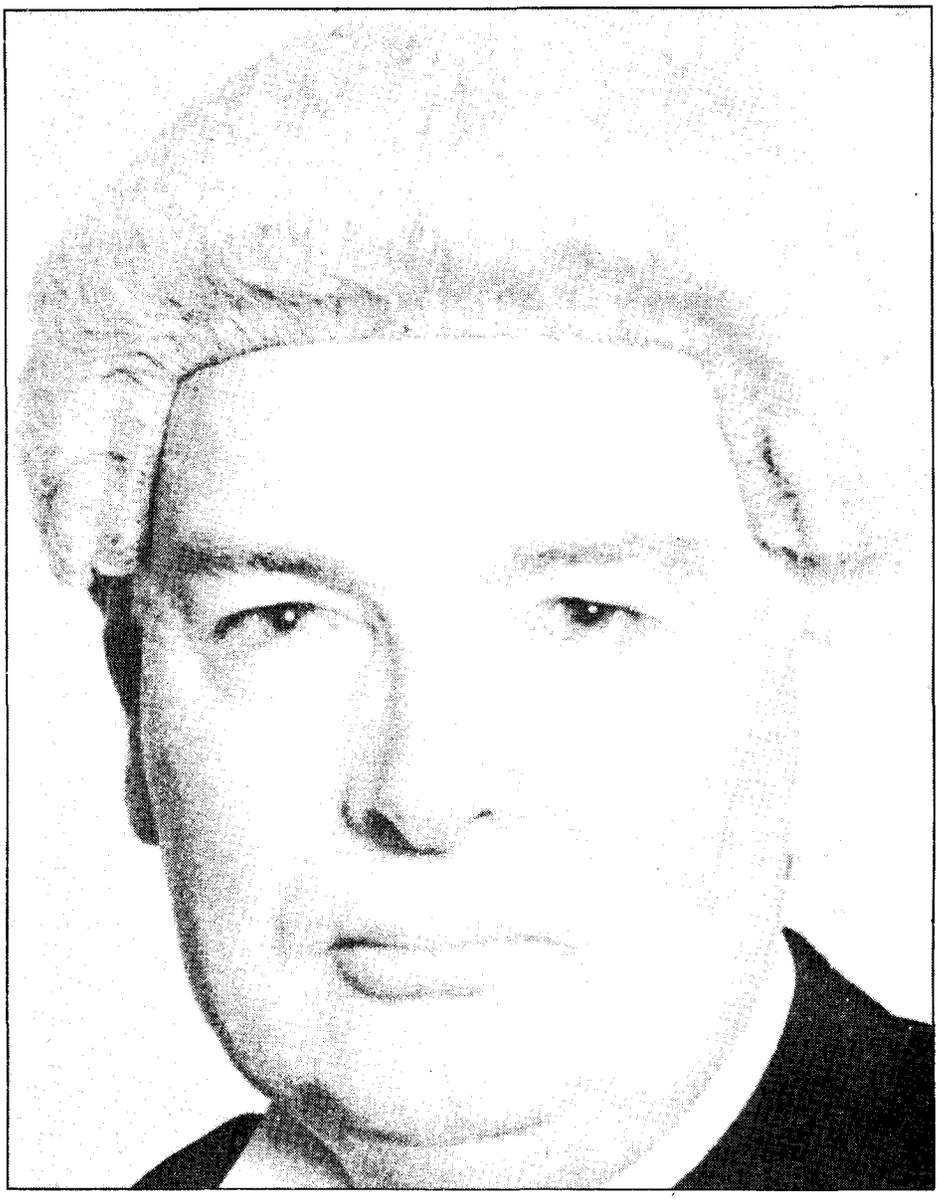
Politburo member Geider Aliev at the recent MPLA Congress, indicate a degree of Soviet concern not previously seen. The visit of Zimbabwean President Mugabe to Moscow in early December, the first he has made there, also betokens a new Soviet willingness to support the forces hostile to apartheid. The fact that Zimbabwe is also going to chair the Non-Aligned Movement next year enhances its importance in Soviet eyes.

Of all the countries with whom the USSR would like to improve relations none is more important than China. Talks on 'normalisation' have been in progress for some years, and, in Chinese eyes, the three major obstacles — Afghanistan, Cambodia and Soviet troops on the frontier — remain. But there has been a large increase in trade and in the level of official visits. Soviet press coverage of China's economic reforms has become much more polite, not to say curious. Moreover, China has indicated that some accommodation on Afghanistan (always the least important for Beijing) and Cambodia may be possible.

New obstacles have, however, arisen: China is now more concerned about the SS-20s in the Soviet Far East than about the troops, and the two states are becoming involved in a competition for influence in the Korean Peninsula, with China edging nearer to South Korea as Moscow courts the North. Relations are already much more 'normal' than they were five years ago, but it remains to be seen if the USSR will take the initiative in reducing troop and missile forces in Siberia.

None of these moves will put a stop to the current Third World offensive being orchestrated by Washington or redress what remains an overall position of Soviet inferiority. But the new Soviet leadership is actively seeking to consolidate what it has in the Third World, and to open diplomatic doors. This policy is pursued to the extent of grotesque and short-sighted opportunism, as in the recent Soviet reception of Imelda Marcos, wife of the Philippines dictator. But prudent as Gorbachev evidently is, he must know too that the Third World may contain more than a few surprises for the US in the years ahead. As Lebanon showed, US public opinion is still reluctant to incur combat deaths in the Third World. Without the USSR having to do anything itself, therefore, US policy in the Third World may come to grief. In the Philippines and South Africa, to name but two, the position of the West is under serious threat. Nicaragua is bleeding, but it has not surrendered. The USSR is not the cause of Third World revolutions and upheavals, but it may, as in the 1970s, derive some long-run benefit and satisfaction from them. It may finally be Reagan, not Gorbachev, who regrets the failure to talk seriously about the Third World in Geneva. □



UPP

LAWS BUST BY HMG IN 1985

We present a previously unreported case heard before His Honour Judge Michael Argyle in the court of public opinion. JOHN RENTOUL was there

The Charges

THAT MRS THATCHER and sundry of her ministers did conspire together in private with persons unknown during 1985:

1. To take £50 million from the Greater London Council and give it to London Regional Transport, now controlled by the said ministers or persons connected with them, in order to make LRT appear more successful under their control.

Transport Minister Nicholas Ridley ordered the GLC to hand over the money in June 1984, when LRT was taken from democratic control. The GLC challenged his order, but it wasn't until JANUARY this year that Justice McNeill in the High Court ruled it unlawful and irrational. Ridley had asked for £50 million more than LRT 'needed' under the LRT Act, which his officials had drawn up.

Ridley had been advised not to contest the GLC's legal action, but persisted, and when he lost brought in an amendment to the

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LRT Act simply requiring the GLC to hand over the extra £50 million.

2. To employ Peter Levene at a total of £107,000 a year (including pension contributions) for the purpose of buying arms from his former company, United Scientific Holdings, among others.

Levene was appointed head of procurement at the Ministry of Defence in MARCH, in breach of civil service rules designed to avoid corruption. When this was pointed out, Mrs Thatcher told Parliament on 18 March that unbreakable undertakings had already been made. Levene's contract was not in fact signed until the next day.

Levene, the best-paid public servant after royalty, is barred from direct dealings with the 11 arms companies in the United Scientific group, of which he was chairperson. Labour MP Gordon Brown commented: 'Uniquely among civil servants he, as a Chief Accounting Officer, is fiscally responsible for transactions of which he has no official knowledge.'

3. To hound young jobless from one part of the country to another, using powers that don't exist, on the basis of a few silly stories in the *Mail* about the 'Costa del Dole'.

Norman Fowler, Health and Social Services Secretary, first laid regulations in APRIL giving him the power to limit bed-and-breakfast charges the DHSS would pay, and the length of time it would pay them, varying from 2 to 8 weeks in different areas.

He was taken to the High Court by a claimant, Simon Cotton, and in July it ruled that he had no such power under the Social Security Act. Fowler then lost on appeal. In the meantime he brought in new temporary regulations in November, which were ruled unlawful by the all-party Commons committee which vets ministerial orders. Later last month Fowler tried again and managed to avoid breaking the law.

4. To prevent the GLC banning heavy lorries at nights and weekends, which it was empowered and entitled to do, and did properly after due consultation, and which will from 31 January 1986 improve the quality of life of its citizens.

On behalf of the road transport lobby, Transport Minister Nicholas Ridley said the ban needed his approval, which he wouldn't give until there had been a public inquiry. In JULY the High Court ruled that he had acted unlawfully and irrationally (again), and that the 200-page report drawn up in 1983 by Derek Wood QC after wide consultation was more than enough by way of public debate.

Ridley appealed and in October the Appeal Court unanimously rejected his case. Two thousand signs, banning lorries over 16.5 tonnes from greater London (except the North Circular) from 9pm to 7am during the week and 1pm Saturdays to 7am Mondays, are now going up.

5. To save a miserable £1.7 million from cold supplementary benefit claimants by unfair and unlawful rules restricting the 'exceptionally severe weather addition'.

In a test case brought by a Kent woman in OCTOBER, the Social Security Commissioners ruled that the DHSS's way of working out the payments using meteorological averages (making it harder to claim in Scotland, for example) was unlawful. The government's response was to leave the payments to local officers' 'discretion'.

6. To bring the European Court of Justice into contempt by first ignoring and now complying sulkily with European Community sex discrimination law.

The British Sex Discrimination Act 1975 allows discrimination in employment by small businesses (fewer than five people) and private households. The European court started 'infringement proceedings' this year and the government is now amending the Act by the absolute minimum needed to comply — retaining an exemption for private household jobs involving 'close personal contact'.

The Plea

THE GOVERNMENT pleads guilty and asks for several other offences committed before 1985 to be taken into consideration, including:

- Allowing Rupert Murdoch to take over the *Sunday Times* in breach of the Fair Trading Act in 1981
- Sinking the *Belgrano* in breach of international law in 1982
- Letting the Stock Exchange off prosecution in the Restrictive Practices Court in 1983
- Only just getting away with banning unions at the GCHQ spy centre in 1984 because the Law Lords rolled over on their backs at the mention of 'national security' (European Court of Human Rights case pending).

The Sentence

JUDGE ARGYLE: 'We read too much in the newspapers about this sort of mindless violence. There is a mounting crime wave — the police have just published some figures I think — and the British constitution is in danger unless exemplary sentences are handed out. The law is the law is the law. Are there any black people in the Cabinet? [Usher: 'No, Your Honour'] Well, there ought to be. Off with their heads.' □

NOVELIST

In 1985 the English political novel reached dizzying new heights when the PM chose Jeffrey Archer as Conservative deputy-propagandist. We posted First Among Equals, *most recent jewel in the* oeuvre *of the novelist-laureate, to the world's greatest master of the art of political fiction. Please welcome to the ranks of* NS *reviewers DANTE ALIGHIERI of Florence*

CIAO. Compared to the bloody French it's always seemed to me, as I made abundantly plain in my *Divine Comedy* (c.1314-21), that the English ought to have a lot to offer the common cause of a united secular Europe. It was with the pleasantest expectations that I unwrapped this production of evident genius — the copy open before me, from *Coronet Books*, has no less than four continuous pages of personal flattery of the author, taken from your newspapers, before the tale even unfolds.

I ask forgiveness in advance if from my seat here on the Mount of Purgatory I commit any solecisms. Your readers will be indulgent if I recollect that my last visit to your beautiful wooded country was in about 1306, when I stayed in Oxford. Your ruler Edward Longshanks was then, as I disapprovingly remarked in the *Comedy*, forever brawling with the Scots. I now discover on p10 of Archer's most interesting epic that as of 1985 you have had no less than eight Scottish heads of government. I conclude that the Scots finally over-ran England.

First Among Equals is set, as was the first third of my *Comedy*, in Hell. It appears that much as we in Italian culture used to speak of it with geographical periphrases — Tartarus, Styx, Dis — so you use terms such as 'Whitehall', 'Westminster', or 'the Palace'. Signor Archer's narrative follows the disasters of four damned souls, Charles Seymour, Simon Kerslake, Ray Gould and Andrew Fraser, as they struggle for who shall be the most degraded: the most hellish in Hell.

The target of their ambitions is an infernal occupation or office styled Prime Minister, no doubt the freezing seat nearest to Satan's. Satan himself makes no very striking appearance, unless I identify him correctly as the obscurely titled, apparently

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BY APPOINTMENT

allegorical, Charles III, who at the very close of the drama emerges from stygian gloom to play a demonic trick on Simon Kerslake, and choose the hapless Ray Gould for his own.

I admit, I am much taken with Archer's idea of *mobility* by souls in Hell. Virgil in his day (c. 0 AD) and I in mine contemplated no such liberty for the infamous. We compelled them to stay put in their level of damnation. Your own great poet, however, goes beyond us and allows them to seek of their own volition ever-lower levels of ignominy. His use of language is a marvel, signalling to us this dreadful intention. On the very first page of the story I find myself underlining *'coming second', 'life's first race', 'survivor', 'ambition', 'failed', 'captain', 'advance'*, and *'beat'*.

We know at once from this magnificent catalogue of vice that we are in a universe stripped to its very bone of clawing self-centredness. And as I myself did in my Hell cantos in my *Inferno* the poet of *First Among Equals* points the moral yet more fiercely by introducing real people, who I gather to be alive in your own times. As allegory of obsequiousness I particularly notice a certain Mike Molloy of the *Mirror* (p 82). And I have been shuddering at many of Archer's fictional creations, no doubt drawn from your folklore: the sin of Obstinacy personified in an invention called Edward Heath; the sin of Tergiversation personified in yet another invention, called Harold Wilson. The latter, nice touch, has a wife who is a poetess — Rebuke seated in the domestic hearth.

Dick Millington

ADMIRABLE. And yet I must unhappily confess to some unease, as I gaze towards you from this Mount, the narrative now closed in my lap. Wisps of vanity remain to us even here in Purgatory. Such is after-life. As I was descending into the abyss of Signor Archer's fantasies I found myself beginning to hope that my own name might appear, as guide through the atrocities.

I was the more encouraged for a while in this expectation by a strange coincidence. I learn from the notes you so kindly supply that just as I endured a dark night of the soul in the very middle of my 30s (it occurred in 1300) so, precisely in his middle 30s, did your own national poet. The opening line of the *Comedy*, which some may still recall — *'nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita'* — describes my mid-life crisis. Worldly ambition in the prime of life cost me my home, my reputation and my career.

I was tossed out of Florence to become a wanderer, and exactly so, I read, did the crude ambition of your Signor Archer tumble him in his middle 30s into bankruptcy and flight from the political life of your capital. Our narratives rose, it seems, from the same personal ashes — his *First Among Equals*, my *Divine Comedy*. Therefore I said to myself: he has known a downfall. He has set out from that pain and despair, as I did, to help you govern yourselves so that the obsessively ambitious may be restrained; the corrupt driven from office; and all narrow pursuit of sectarian advantage be anathematised, in the sure knowledge that few can ever be in charge of events, and most must patiently suffer whatever the powerful decide.

I long to salute my successor, your contemporary. I yearn the more to do so when I gather, as I have done from these biographical notes lying loose between my fingers, that a more cultivated national leader than it was ever *my* lot to know has apparently rewarded Signor Archer with very high rank: the deputy-chairmanship of your Conservative Party. I assume this was done to end all his money worries, the torment of all in the tradition of Virgil and (if I may say so) Dante who are lovers of language and would better the human fate.

Yet I have searched *First Among Equals* — it is all I have to go upon — for any signposts to other conduct and other aims than pursuit of private gain and personal social advantage. Surely there can have been no scenes like his politicians in Westminster since my own abominable popes and unspeakable French monarchs in my own Hell? But do I mistake his intentions? Are we (I cannot bear to think it) intended to *admire*? Are these folk *respected* by Archer and by this Conservative Party which has honoured him? He should have let my ghost walk by the reader's side through this desolate political landscape. *I* would have pointed the finger . . .

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ANNOUNCING AN ELECTIO

By our heavenly affairs correspondent Andrew Lumsden

TABLETS leaked to the *New Statesman* indicate that a requisite two-thirds majority of world deities has agreed to fresh elections for the position of GOD. Draft proposals went to the Electoral Law Reform Society last week and are expected to be approved by end-January.

This move ends centuries of uncertainty and is in sharp contrast to the inconclusive proceedings of AD 985 (see *NS* 8 January 986).

An Atropine party, headed by Atropus, Greek goddess of life-expectancy (*symbol*: shears) has however been formed by dissident deities to campaign for abolition of the office of GOD and will be allowed equal time in which to urge mortals to spoil their ballot papers.

We have seen seven heads of agreement:

- Any god may stand or be drafted whether currently politically active or not
- The term 'god' shall not exclude any deity on grounds of gender, orientation or race
- Candidates must register by 30 April next; pantheons may opt to stand as one candidate
- Voting shall be by secret ballot and universal suffrage with no lower age limit
- Only mortals shall be eligible to vote (ie, demiurges, afreets, angels etc and gods themselves are disqualified)
- The books of supporter (ie, religious) organisations shall be open to inspection through the campaign
- The decision of Moira (*Greek*: necessity, goddess of) shall be final in any dispute

THE CAMPAIGN is to run for 13 years (1 May 1986 – 30 April 1999) as had been widely anticipated, though a surprise allowance of four months (May-August inclusive 1999) has been made for the ballot.

It is understood that Enki (*Sumerian*: moulder of clay c.BC 3000, hence inventor of writing) pointed out that a global election involves so many time zones, inaccessible geographical areas, and possibilities for gerrymandering by local interests committed to individual candidates, that multiple re-counts are inevitable. This view was accepted after a fierce procedural battle in Standing Commandments Committee, where still-worshipped gods were routed.

Another modification to electoral arrangements, we can disclose, is that the result will now be announced on 1 September 1999, instead of 31 December 1999 previously forecast, to provide for a smooth transfer of power on following 1 January — a hint that betting in informed circles is moving against another term for the present incumbent (*Christian*, GOD, the Father).

We predicted here (*Gregorian or Julian?*, *NS* 12 April 1582) that anxiety over the calendar would be a critical factor in the run-up to the next millennium, and so it has

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N FOR GOD

turned out. Sources confirm that this was the issue which narrowly swung the two-thirds majority for the fresh universal elections.

We learn that:

- In the event of the present incumbent securing a majority the global convention as to the calendar will continue as now (ie, the first day following 31 December 1999 will be internationally regarded as 1 January 2000, and so on thereafter)
- Should another candidate be successful the Christian Era (or AD) system will be regarded as terminating at midnight on 31 December 1999 and the following morning will see the dawn of a new era.

We have been authorised to offer an example of what all this might mean, provided it is not taken for electioneering before the off. Should say Brahma (*Hindu*, a creator and god of balanced opposites) top the poll in September 1999 the world will recognise the following 1 January as 1/1/1 — or more pedantically, as 1/1/1 BE, for Brahma Era.

Though no god will go on the record at this tense moment in preparations, all but one of those we have talked to is confident that humanity at least will be delighted at the opportunity to make a new start less than two decades from now.

THE STAGE is accordingly set for the greatest exercise in democracy the heavens or the earth have ever seen. It is estimated that some 7 billion humans may be on the register by the time polling stations open in the early summer of 1999.

A formidable task awaits agencies of the UN who will be expected to have television receiver facilities in place in every inhabited region of the globe by the time campaigning hots up in the 1990s. Simultaneous translation teams are to be recruited from next 1 May and (in this country) it is understood that Home Office officials are already in consultation with the BBC and IBA over allocation of the 'gods slots' so that there will be minimal interference with regular programming.

The deities are still keeping very close to their chests just how they're starting to shape up for the biggest test of their popularity and performance in a very long time, but among a number of party groupings two should be of particular interest to the West:

- As indicated in Papal journeyings (*viz* to Israel in 1964 and to Islamic Morocco this year) a joint-slate from Yahweh, Allah and God (GOD, present incumbent) is under active consideration
- This is largely in response to persistent rumours that Mary (*Christian*, mother) Diana (*Greek*, virgin) and Inanna/Ishtar (*Sumero-Assyrian*: satisfied desire, goddess of) are assembling a collective to run as one candidate

The 'joker' is of course the extension of the franchise to the non-human world of mortality: vertebrate, invertebrate and vegetable. Even if the very delicate negotiations over proportional representation now to be shouldered by the Electoral Law Reform Society reach a satisfactory conclusion, few observers believe that Gaia (the earth itself, goddess of) will be easy to beat in 1999.

Nearly every living thing other than humanity is for her. □

Additional research by the Bishop of Durham

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JOBS FOR THE GIRLS

WELL, if you're not worried, we certainly are. 1985 marked the *end* of the United Nations Decade for Women. Just think of it. For ten years, Fat Cats have been pledged to improve our lot. OK, so you may not have noticed much change; but in that case consider for a moment what things are going to be like when they're not even *trying*.

After all, even now too many of us are unemployed or work for terrible money or the Metropolitan county councils. And the future doesn't look much better. So how about extending our horizons a little and exploring the job opportunities available to British women in the past. Surely there must be something there to suit you?

Kate Charlesworth and Marsaili Cameron are authors of All That, *an illustrated history of British women, to be published by Pandora Press (paperback) in 1986.*

Job Title: ROPEMAKER
District : N.E.England
Period : 1920s

Wage : Better than 'service'; not as good as the man working next to you.
Hours : Mon-Fri, 8am-6pm. Sat mornings.
You will be expected to attend annual 'brake trips'. Obligatory excess (drink, song) Heavy work, rolling rope through machines, then oiling it. Candidates must be prepared to develop constant lacerations & callouses on the hands, & to reek of oil for most of their working life. A propensity for strong drink, trouser wearing & bad language is an advantage.
Successful candidates will not be pregnant; but prudes need not apply. Ability to ignore social stigma & stick with your own kind makes life easier. Noone under 14 considered. Candidates are reminded that unless their Auntie gets them a job at the electric works, 'Service' is the only alternative to the Ropery.

Wage: Negotiable. Some employers will favour a bed & board arrangement.
Hours: Irregular. Likely to coincide with daylight, but few early morning starts.
Working conditions are likely to vary, depending on Employer's status. Ability to withstand severe cold without shivering a distinct advantage. Occupational hazards: romanticised tuberculosis & sexual harassment.
Candidates will be under 28 yrs, & look terrific. At present, a hunted, dark-eyed look is at a premium; skinny physique; crown of life-affirming hair. (Successful models may be promoted to position of Muse -this entails looking interesting ALL the time.
This work may well attract young aspiring female artists, who may well pick up a few hints; but 'female accomplishments' have nothing to do with 'Great Art'.

Job Title: ARTIST'S MODEL
District : Chelsea
Period : 1870s

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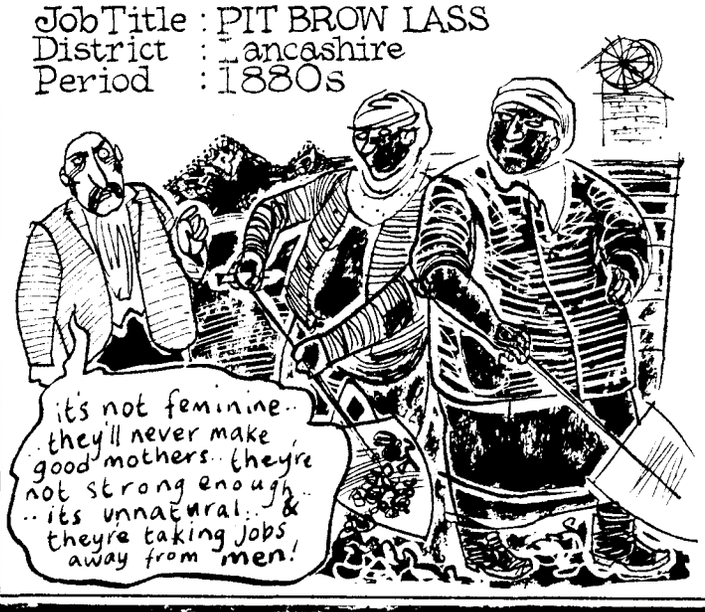
Wage: Oatcakes & ale at occassional Sabbat.
General promise from Devil that you shall 'never want'. Exceptional candidates can expect 'all the pleasures of the earth'
Hours: Irregular. Considerable night work. Most candidates will be expected to enter into a Demonic Pact. This contract ensures your immortal soul sells at the market rate.
Candidates to be proficient in flattening crops, storm raising, making people ill (& if you feel like it, making them better again.)
Most successful candidates report that for once, they are taken seriously. Many vacancies are reserved for women from the lower stratum of society.
At present, the craft is totally illegal. *Scottish authorities make no distinction between 'healers' & 'cursers'. If convicted, you will not be fined, you will be strangled & burned.

Job Title : WITCH
District : Fife
Period : 1620s

Job Title : PIT BROW LASS
District : Lancashire
Period : 1880s


it's not feminine.. they'll never make good mothers.. they're not strong enough.. its unnatural.. & they're taking jobs away from men!

Wage : 1/8d per day. (½ of male surface wage)
Hours: Mon-Fri 6am 4pm (Plenty of time to help your Mam at home) plus Sat. mornings.
The work offers some variety, sorting & cleaning coal, filling & moving railway wagons. Agility & strength are desirable, since most employers in this field are coming to resent the amount of time spent at inquests.
Other occupational hazards: being befriended by fetishistic middle class gentlemen; being patronised by various do-gooders As females, you will be ineligible for union membership; & indeed, will find the miner's union a loud challenger of your right to work
This outdoor job offers bracing conditions. The fast pace of work mitigates against the cold, & all those interested in pumping iron should seriously consider an early application.

Wage: Voluntary work, rewards lie in unusually high job satisfaction & expectation of divine gratitude.
Hours: 24 hr. call. You may be required to transmit important messages at any time Demanding work, involving physical stamina & good working knowledge of Old Testament & Apocrypha. You may have to prophesy for hours at a stretch exhibiting, as required, signs of trance & ecstacy.
Familiarity with current affairs is desirable (prophetesses have influenced Oliver Cromwell & friends.) No formal qualifications needed. A marked facility for vivid communication, & a willingness to aknowledge any opinion expressed as that of God, helps.
Candidates will encounter social opprobium or adulation, depending on prophecies outcome Just hope noone important thinks you're a witch

Job Title : Prophetess
District : S.E. England
Period : 1640-1655

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Raisa Gorbachev's Christmas Quiz

All drawings by Colin Wheeler

GREETINGS, little friends! You are surprised to find me here, no? Me too. At Geneva summit I was approached by strange man in motor-bike helmet who told me he was editor of *News Statement*, prestigious British government journal, and would I write something for him? Urged on by Mik (that's my husband) I signed the contract and began to prepare feature article ('piece', as you call them) about Soviet-British friendship. It was only then that my milliner pointed out clause in small print: 'I hereby undertake to set a Christmas quiz.' So here we are.

I have tried to make the questions difficult. As famous British poet Shakespeare says, you can't make Hamlet without breaking eggs. But for some of you it will not be difficult enough. I apologise. The man in the skid lid has not been generous with his hard currency, and as great British revolutionary leader Eric Heffer has said, if you pay peanuts you get dolphins. Or, as we say in my part of world, there's many a mickle makes a muckle.

Since nobody in Great Britain knows anything about Soviet Union, I have kept my homeland out of the body of the quiz. But I would like you to have a flavour of this great country of ours, so before you go further please fill large glass with tonsil-tickling vodka, put Shostakovich on hi-fi and answer the following. Which dog is named after the Russian word for 'swift'? Which beef dish is named after a 19th-century Russian diplomat? Which countries are members of the Warsaw Pact? Which country withdrew from the Warsaw Pact in 1968? What was the name of the American U-2 pilot who was shot down while spying over the USSR in 1960? What is the capital of Georgia? What is the capital of the Ukraine? Which Russian composers were known as 'the mighty Five'? Which Russian composer died of cholera in St Petersburg in 1893? How many kopeks in a rouble? Which Russian author was made to stand in front of a firing squad at the age of 28, before being sent to Siberia for ten years? Which Russian author learned to ride a bicycle at the age of 67?

Answers on page 66

Cashing in

In 1985,
a) Which female pop singer topped the charts with a song called 'The Power of Love'?
b) Which all-male pop group topped the charts with a song called 'The Power of Love'?
c) Which pop singer won damages from *New Musical Express* after it described his religious beliefs as 'sanctimonious and absurd'?
d) Which pop singer, together with his lyric-writer, took their former music publisher to court?
e) Which pop group sacked Lindsay Anderson from the job of directing a film about their trip to China?
f) Which pop singer was held hostage on a TWA jet in Beirut?
g) Which rock guitarist published a book called *Horse's Neck*?
h) Which rock singer's lover published a book called *Tall Tales*?
i) Which rock star gave £16,000 to British miners' wives?

Walkie-talkies

1: In 1985, who said:
a) 'It is very nice on Tuesday and Thursday, and other evenings when the work is done, to partake of this most excellent product [Scotch whisky]'?
b) 'To borrow and to borrow and to borrow is not Macbeth with a heavy cold. It is Labour Party policy'?
c) 'Those that could not speak, I just laid my hand on. I wanted them to know I was there'?
d) 'I do occasionally read the *New Statesman*, but when it says something about me I don't'?
e) 'For the first time in my life I've

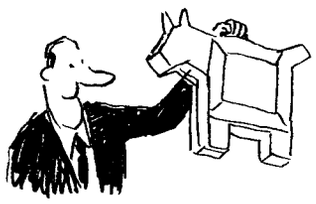
got the kitchen I've always wanted'?

2: In 1985, who said of whom:
a) 'Some people have the impression my father can't maintain himself in a one-to-one with someone'?
b) 'I'm sure if you asked he would like to camp out in an Aboriginal site for a couple of weeks. I'm sure he'd dig that. But he can't because of who he is. It's not an easy gig'?
c) 'I think if he was writing today, he'd probably be the chief script writer of *Dallas* or *Dynasty* — a bit of the bawdy!'?
d) 'Her highest ideals are the shabby values of *Dallas* and *Dynasty* where the poor are kept safely off the screen'?
e) 'I'm her biggest fan because what she crams into a day I could never achieve'?

3: In 1985, who described whom as
a) 'a hen-pecked wimp'?
b) 'a mad spalpeen'?
c) 'a manoeuvring swine'?
d) 'a woman of great intelligence and even brilliance, a strong woman with good taste'?

Heavy petting

a) Which Chancellor of the



Exchequer had a dog called Budget?
b) Which Labour politician had a dog called Dizzy (after Disraeli)?
c) Which Prime Minister had (among many other pets) a cat called Margate, a poodle called Rufus Two and a parakeet called Toby?
d) Which American President had a Scottish terrier called Fala?
e) Which American President had a white collie called Blanco, another white dog called Yuki and numerous beagles, including two called Him and Her?
f) Which American Vice-Presidential candidate had a little cocker spaniel called Checkers?
g) What was the name of the poodle with which John Steinbeck travelled round America in 1960?
h) What was the name of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's cocker spaniel, who later had his biography written by Virginia Woolf?
i) What was the name of Hitler's alsatian?
j) What was the name of Dr Johnson's cat?
k) What was the name of the cat which was 'the bafflement of Scotland Yard, the Flying Squad's despair'?

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l) What was the name of Bill Sikes's 'white shaggy dog with his face scratched and torn in twenty places' in *Oliver Twist*?

Body Count

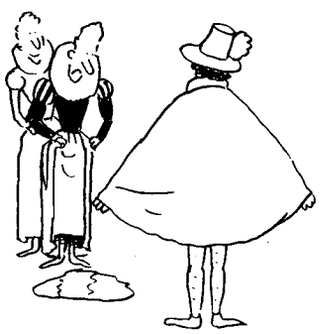
How many
a) Find-Outers?
b) Years On?
c) Against Thebes?
d) French Hens?
e) Trombones?
f) Days That Shook the World?
g) impossible things before breakfast?
h) Articles?
i) Years in Sing-Sing?
j) Leagues Under the Sea?
k) Scampies?
l) Stooges?
m) Dials?
n) Steps to Love?
o) Eyes of Greece?
p) Men's Morris
q) Miles High?

Passing on

Of those who died in 1985,
a) Who created the comic-strip hero Dan Dare?
b) Who created the comic-strip detective Dick Tracey?
c) Who played the organ beside the seaside for 40 years?
d) Who presented the same programme for more than 40 years, accompanied by seagulls?
e) Who introduced the opening night of BBC TV in 1936 *and* the opening night of ITV in 1955?
f) Who starred in a famous television comedy series of the 1950s, originally called *You'll Never Get Rich*?
g) Who died after more than 10 years in a coma?
h) Who died weeks before the sixth anniversary of his heart transplant?
i) Who died months before her company was launched on the stock exchange?
j) Who died 69 years after *The Times* had announced his death at the Somme?
k) Who turned out not to have died at all, even though *The Times* had printed his obituary?
l) Who scored a first-class cricket century in a record 35 minutes in 1920, and sat on the London County Council from 1952 to 1958?
m) Who drove an ambulance for the International Brigade at the front line in the Spanish Civil War, and directed the film of *Brighton Rock* in 1947?
n) Who played the Pharoah in Cecil B. de Mille's 1956 film of *The Ten Commandments*?
o) Who played Cardinal Wolsey in the film of Robert Bolt's *A Man For All Seasons*?
p) Who won an Oscar for *Room at the Top*?
q) Who was nominated for an Oscar for *Giant*?
r) Who was once described by *The Times* as being a better man when drunk than Harold Wilson was when sober?
s) Who was described in *The Times* by President Reagan as having 'a pen sharper than a scalpel'?

Title deeds

Who was or were
a) The Prime Minister of Mirth?
b) The Sultans of Swing?
c) The Pope of Fleet Street?
d) The Queen of Curds and Cream?
e) The Knight of the Cloak?



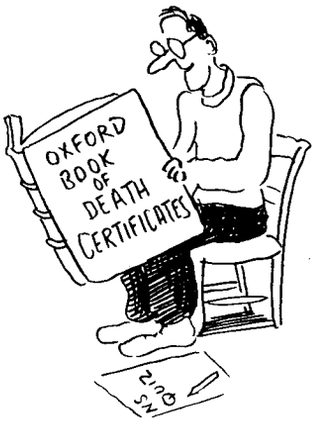
f) The Ambassador of the Air?
g) The King of Dullness?
h) The Prince of Humbug?
i) The Father of Lightning?
j) Our Lady of Pain?
k) The regent of love-rhymes, lord of folded arms, the anointed sovereign of sighs and groans, liege of all loiterers and malcontents, dread prince of plackets, king of codpieces, sole imperator, and great general of trotting paritors?

Annual Report

In 1985,
a) Whose new novel was called *The Good Terrorist*?
b) Whose new novel was called *The Good Apprentice*?
c) Which French novelist became £160,000 richer?
d) Which French novelist had a heart attack in Colombia?
e) Who, after being fired from a £43,000-a-year job, admitted that 'many people have lost their jobs in recent years who are much worse off then I am'?
f) Who resigned from a £33,260-a-year job because the salary made it 'almost impossible to finance a life in London'?
g) Which religious leader was released from a rehabilitation centre in the United States after serving 13 months of an 18-month sentence?
h) Which religious leader left the United States in a hurry to avoid being taken to court, saying 'I have lived in the US for five years and this time has been hell'?
i) Which former secretary to an MP published a book called *A Question of Judgment*?
j) Which former civil servant published a book called *The Right to Know*?
k) Which former chairman of the Conservative Party published a book called *The Amateur: A Companion to Watercolour*?
l) Which Labour MP published a novel called *Power Failure*?
m) What brought together Joanna Lumley, Norman St John-Stevas, Nina Bawden and Marina Warner?
n) What brought together Sam Brittan, Judith Chalmers, Alastair Hetherington and Lord Quinton?
o) What brought together Sir Richard O'Brien, David Sheppard, Wilfred Wood and Ron Keating?
p) What brought together Claire Rayner, Lord Lichfield, Catherine Cookson and Denis Healey?
q) Which 13-year-old got a first?
r) Which 70-year-old, asked how he kept fit, replied 'gin and cigarettes'?

Ways of escape

1: How did the following people die?



a) William Huskisson
b) Emily Davison
c) William I
d) William II
e) Isadora Duncan
f) Spencer Perceval
g) Arnold Bennett
h) Emiliano Zapata
i) Mama Cass
j) Albert Camus
k) James Dean
l) Oliver Cromwell

2: Who said or wrote the following?

a) Let me die a youngman's death
not a clean & inbetween
the sheets holy-water death
b) I can't remember if I cried
When I read about his widowed bride
c) Nobody heard him, the dead man,
But still he lay moaning
d) what i want to know is
how do you like your blue eyed boy
Mister Death

Pinko

a) The people's flag is deepest red; it shrouded oft . . . whom?
b) *Permanent Red* is a collection of art criticism by whom?
c) Who was murdered in the Red Barn?
d) Who wrote a crime novel called *Five Red Herrings*?
e) What had *Red, Hot and Blue* in common with *Kiss Me Kate*?
f) What had *The Red Petticoat* in common with *Show Boat*?
g) In which county is Redhill?
h) In which county is Redruth?
i) Whose coomb was redder than the fyn coral?
j) Who played the heroine in Powell and Pressburger's film *The Red Shoes*?
k) Who were the two stars of the film *Red Dust*?
l) What is a redbud?
m) What is a redpoll?
n) In which game might you be shown a red card?

Playing up

Which sport or game
a) was included in the Olympics for the first time in 1984, having had its first world championship in 1973?
b) was first played in the 1870s at the Duke of Beaufort's country estate, but didn't have an official world championship until 1977?
c) is thought to have been invented in 1875 by Colonel Sir Neville Chamberlain, a British army officer in India?
d) was, according to legend, invented in 1823 by a 16-year-old boy 'with a fine disregard for the rules of football'?
e) was invented by Harold Vanderbilt of New York in about 1925?
f) was banned, along with football, in Scotland in the fifteenth century?
g) was celebrated in Robert Burns's poem 'Tom Samson's Elegy'?
h) is the national game of Ireland?
i) was previously called *sphairistike*?
j) is named after a Japanese word meaning 'gentle way'?

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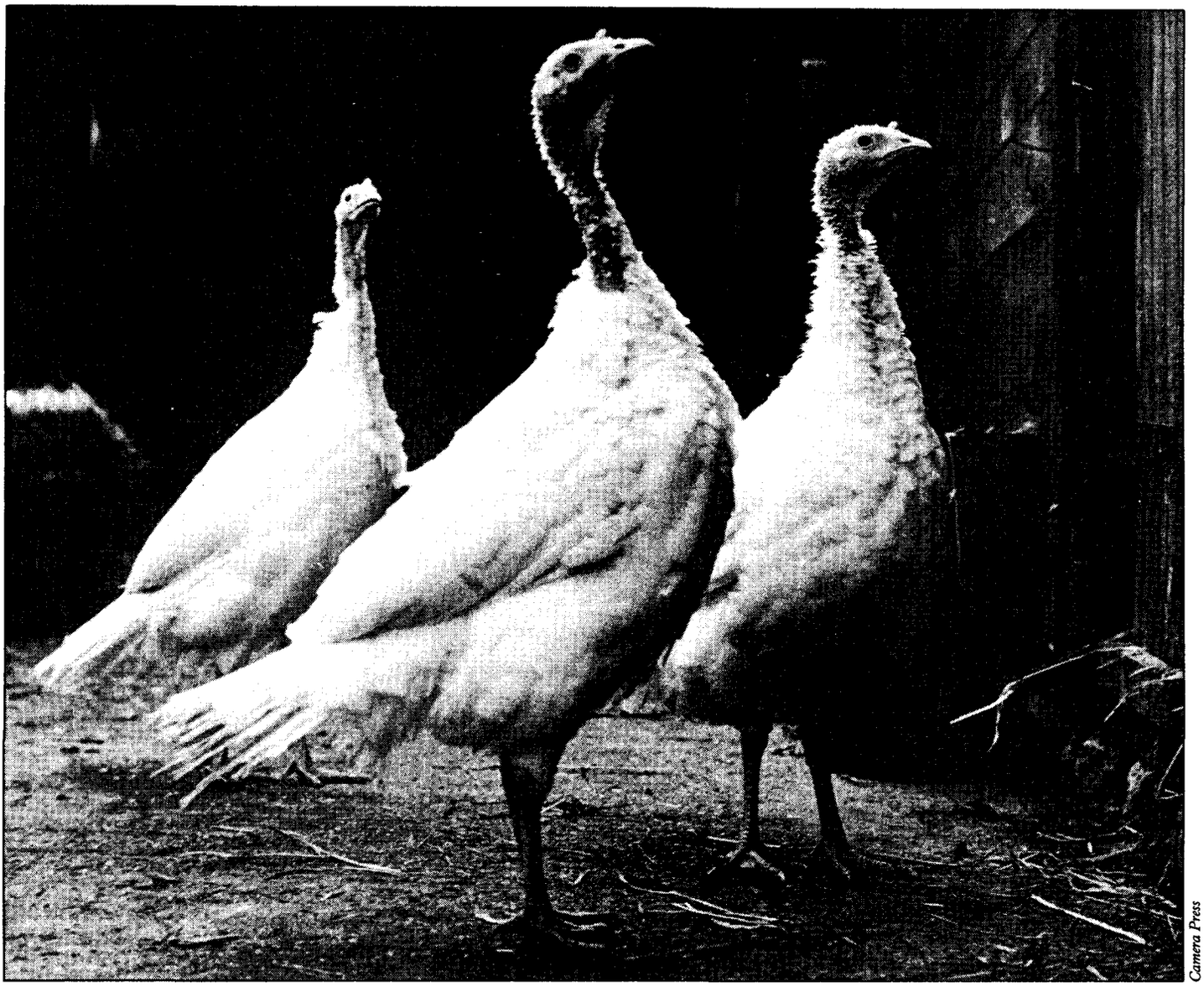

Camera Press

GOBBLE GOBBLE!

Here's something to stick in your throat, a journey down the Yuletide oesophagus with HANNAH WRIGHT

HANDS UP anyone who has ever seen a turkey or who knows what 'gobble gobble' really sounds like.

Yet this invisible bird, seen fully feathered and on its feet only in children's picture books, plays the central role in the British family Christmas. Between now and New Year about 10½ million turkeys will be eaten in Britain, a fifth of a 15-pounder for every man, granny and baby in a manger. Fat, golden and crispy, the dead turkey is an effective instrument of temporary family unity, even for those who don't really like it.

Turkeys aren't reared free range on a commercial scale because of their unbusinesslike tendency to run around, toughening the leg muscles and lowering efficiency as a vegetable-into-animal-protein-conversion-unit. The majority live in huge flocks in a 'controlled environment' — artificially lit and heated sheds. A substantial minority are housed in open sided barns, where the farmer swaps fuelling the shed's heating system for fuelling the turkeys, and the birds get a look at the daylight and hop on and off the straw bales for diversion. Their brief life, though imprisoned, isn't thought to be cruel; their leaving of it is.

The holiday ends for most birds between 13 and 18 weeks. Some males (stags, not cocks!) are grown on to 24 weeks-plus to be turned into turkey 'ham' and 'sausage'. The journey to the 'poultry processing plant', packed tightly into crates, often in very cold conditions, can last at least 12 hours without food or water and is very very unpleasant for the hitherto feather-bedded victims.

The dazed birds are then shackled and suspended upside down by their feet for up to six minutes on a conveyor belt, stunned in an electrically charged water bath and killed by an electric throat-cutting machine before being plunged into scalding water for easy feather removal. In its 1982 report *The Welfare of Poultry at the Time of Slaughter* the government-funded Farm Animal Welfare Council said that a large number of poultry were only dazed by the stunning bath. 'We consider that substantial numbers may still be sensitive to pain.' As for manual slaughter: 'The work is sometimes carried

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out in unduly cramped and repulsive conditions which may affect the efficiency of operatives'.

The automatic throat cutting machines are claimed to be 96 per cent efficient. Out of $10\frac{1}{2}$ million this means that 420,000 may in fact die by scalding. Some processing plants, however, do employ a standby 'operative' to 'stick' any turkeys that have escaped the machine. (Slaughterhouse terminology is, not surprisingly, full of Newspeak.) By the time the 200th anniversary of the French Revolution arrives, a system of instant decapitation will probably have replaced the present unsatisfactory stunning and sticking procedure.

Our Christmas predation does not end with the confined life and ugly death of a none-too-brilliant bird. There is the far greater matter of our predation upon our own species. Pigs and poultry, the stuff of which Christmas dinners are made, compete with humans for the same high protein, high energy foods. They are not ruminants with the marvellous double stomach system for converting rough grass and forage into flesh, milk and traction strength.

It was no doubt this vegan purity that gave ox, ass, and sheep walk-on parts at the nativity from which goats, chickens (and of course pigs) were notably absent — and turkeys too far away to audition.

TURKEY STARTER FOOD No 2 (No 1 is for the hatchery, not the farmer), as produced by the independent millers and feed merchants Marriage of Chelmsford, contains 21 per cent soya from Brazil, about 63 per cent British wheat, 10 per cent fish meal (probably Chilean, but S African and Icelandic are also used) plus other bits such as bone meal and binder.

Soya, in the form of beans, meal, flour and oil, forms 80 per cent of the world's oil seed market. The USA still produces most of this, but much of their crop goes to feed the soya-hungry Japanese. Brazil is the second biggest producer and soya is now its principal export crop. British turkeys are getting a lot of Brazilian soya just now because US quality is suspect. David Filmer, nutritionist of the big British Oil Cake Mills, is also using Brazilian soya, British wheat and Chilean, S African or Norwegian fish meal for turkey food, and Mexican sunflower seeds.

The intelligent and companionable pig eats much the same sort of thing, with the addition of molasses for lucky pregnant sows in intensive systems (chained for four months in a narrow concrete crate in which they can't turn round and can only lie down by sticking their feet into the next crate).

A little tinkering with vitamin content, palatability and presentation ('would Modom prefer granules or pellets?') and either feed would improve our own over-processed gunk, not to mention the meagre diets of the hungry half of the world. Indeed it is guesstimated that the animal feed tonnage sent to the rich nations would more than fill the protein and energy needs of the poor countries.

Soya, rich in oil and 40 per cent protein, is a vital part of the animal feed industry. 'Without soya, there would be a dramatic change in the range and quality of meat available', says Peter Marriage. Although some soya is now being produced in France and Italy, this is still only a pellet in the bucket of the EEC feed industry. In 1984 Britain imported 1.2 million tons of soya meal plus another half million tons of soya

Dick Millington

beans for animal feed, while only 123,000 tons of beans were imported for direct human consumption.

Brazil is itself quite a rich nation, but with areas of serious deprivation and crippling foreign debts. Soya has only become its principal export crop in the last 10 years. The big internationally-owned soya estates have so far been established mainly in the south central state of San Paulo. While some violent evictions no doubt took place to clear large blocks of land for mechanized soya cultivation, most small and medium farmers were bought out with what seemed a large bag of cash. According to Dr Colin Lewis of the Institute of Latin American Studies some displaced farmers went to the interior to farm supposedly rich virgin land, but it was only rich for a year or two and then the farms failed. Others drifted to the city where the big bag diminished at high speed. It is always the landless rural poor who are the first to suffer malnutrition.

SUNFLOWER SEED production has a different history. After the Mexican Revolution of 1910, much land reform took place. As a result foreigners cannot own land, nor can peasants lose their land. Nevertheless the sunflower-growing peasants of Sinaloa and El Bajia in NW Mexico don't necessarily grow this export cash crop because they want to, says Roberto Escalante, former lecturer in Agrarian Studies at the University of Mexico.

A larger farmer with abutting land will often help in a little financial difficulty. Once the peasant is in debt, the big farmer can add this extra parcel of land to his next year's contract with a big animal-feed company. Whether the peasant farmer's profit is his own or the big neighbour's, he's not growing maize and beans for local consumption. Sunflower production is fully mechanised except for the harvest, when large numbers of homeless migrant workers are used.

Chile is now the world's largest exporter of fishmeal, but has only been so for the last two years or so. Before, it was Peru, but Peruvian waters are now 'fished out'. So a very poor country has lost, at least for the time being, a very important food resource which went to feed millions of western hens, long since dead and eaten.

The rich nations use about 15 times as much of the earth's natural resources per person as do the less developed countries. This includes food and also popular 'non-foods' such as tea and coffee. Much of this food, non-food and animal feed comes from poor countries where it's grown in large plantations using very mechanised western techniques. These export crops are grown on the best land and stand in the way of an authentic local agriculture which would provide wages for the labourless, land for the landless and food for the hungry.

As Dr Susan George says in *Ill Fares the Land*, 'of every $100 spent on tropical produce in its final form, producer countries get only $15'. (And that means the big boys not the peasants.)

The use of high quality human-use foods to feed livestock at a very poor conversion rate — about 8lb of feed to get 1lb of turkey meat — is the most obvious abuse of food resources, but vegetarians, all set to enjoy a Brazil Nut Christmas Roast, are in no position to smirk. Although to a greater or lesser extent they avoid preying upon animals, their direct use of tropical produce, soya of course, other pulses, rice, nuts and fruit, is far greater than that of your average meat and 2 veg man.

It's very tempting to have lots of Christmas goodies including a big turkey and slices of delicious ham. It's rather less delicious to consider the suffering and deprivation that these habits of excess consumption cause less powerful humans and animals. Perhaps Christmas is the very best time of year to begin trying to eat for justice rather than greed. □

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IF THE CAPTION FITS...

ONCE a fortnight, just before you avert your eyes, you glance at the bubble on the *Private Eye* cover, and think *'I could do better than that!'* Once a week you leaf guiltily through the *Mail on Sunday*'s society-picture captions, and think *'I could do better than that!'*

Here's your left-wing chance. Fill in captions, send us the results not later than Friday 10 January, and not only will we publish the best — fame! immortality! — but you'll be in the draw for a PRIZE!

The judges' decision will not only be final, but erratic. A single brilliant caption may as easily make you a winner as a vicious set of six, or any number of high scores in between. The more you try, the better your chances . . . high-denomination banknotes enclosed with your entry will be regarded with the greatest disapproval, before pocketing.

And our panel of judges? PETER COOK, WOODY ALLEN, MIRIAM MARGOLYES, LENNY HENRY, ART BUCHWALD, PAMELA STEPHENSON, JOHN CLEESE (oy, not him!), and THE CUDDLY LEFT. Failing these, the *NS*'s own Ideological Purity Collective will do our best . . . live-in relatives of *NS* staff, or their lovers, spouses, illicit liaisons, *cinq à septs*, gardeners, indoor servants, lodgers, offspring, and members of the same ward may only enter under a false name and in a beard. ●

AP

(1) Even Thatcher can hardly be talking with her mouth full of cup, so what's Howe saying?

Camera Press

(2) Unless it's the stock-room at Tussaud's, the mad Prince and the apprehensive Princess are talking to Barry Manilow

(3) No lapel badge needed by Reagan's poodle, but the bridgework on the right belongs to Dr Paul Cook, laser genius

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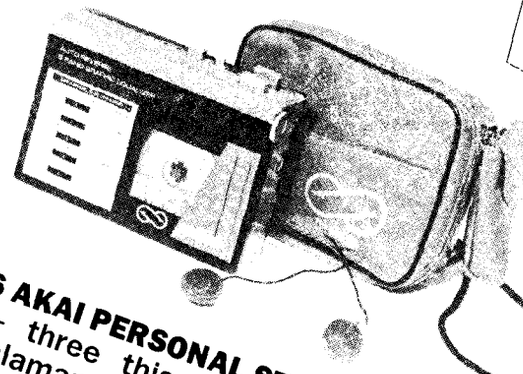
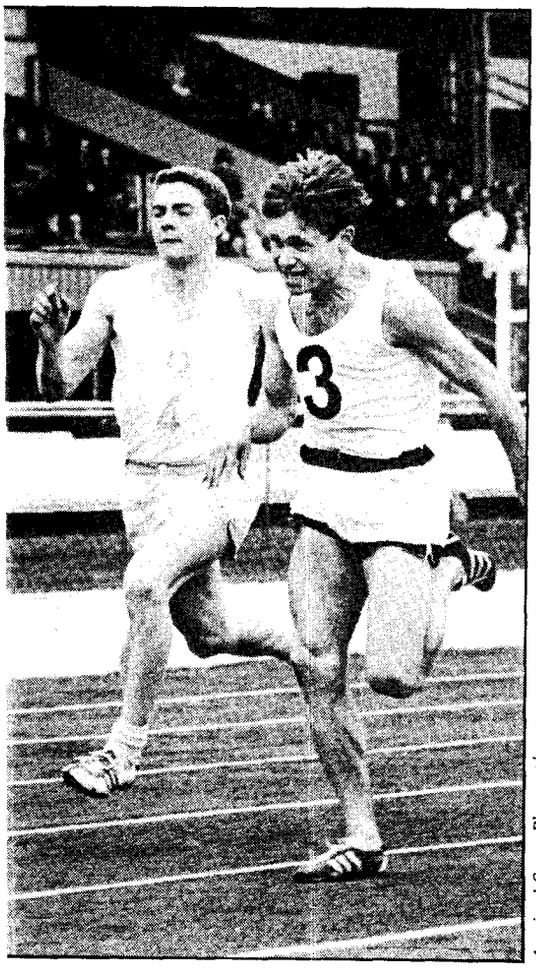
The Guardian

(4) Keith Joseph in the soundproofed room at Leyland vehicles research centre, put there by desperate teachers



6 AKAI PERSONAL STEREOS to be won — three this week and three with Salamanca crosswords to be published on 3 January, 7 February and 7 March 1986.

The PM-R3 AKAI Personal Stereo Cassette Player, **worth £69**, has built-in FM/AM radio, 5-band graphic equaliser, auto reverse for non-stop listening and is fully compatible with SX-R3 personal speakers and MP-303 mains adaptor. Carrying case and headphones are included.



Associated Sports Photography

(5) Jeffrey Archer, 'thunderthighs', winning by a mouth in the 100 yards in 1965 (*that's enough Jeffrey Archer* — ED)

Camera Press

(6) The, um, what's-their-names, thinggies, you know. What the hell's going on outside the window?

Glittering prizes to be won

In addition to the AKAI Personal Stereos (see above), we are offering the following prizes to winners of our 'If the caption fits . . .' contest:

10 £5 ABC cinema vouchers (redeemable at any ABC cinema in the UK)

6 three-month subscriptions to the *New Statesman*

Enter **NOW!** Remember, we need all caption contest entries by **10 January** latest.

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Down the clinical disco

Short story by Fay Weldon

David Hine

YOU NEVER KNOW where you'll meet your own true love. I met mine down the clinical disco. That's him over there, the thin guy with the jeans, the navy jumper and the red woolly cap. He looks pretty much like anyone else, don't you think? That's hard work on his part, not to mention mine, but we got there in the end. Do you want a drink? Gin? Tonic? Fine. I'll just have an orange juice. I don't drink. Got to be careful. You never know who's watching. They're everywhere. Sorry, forget I said that. Even a joke can be paranoia. Do you like my hair? That's a golden gloss rinse. Not my style really: I have this scar down my cheek, see: if I turn to the light? A good short crop is what suits me best, always was: I suppose I've got what you'd call a strong face. Oops, sorry dear, didn't mean to spill your gin; it's the heels, I do my best but I can never quite manage stilettos. But it's an ill wind; anyone watching would think I'm ever so slightly tipsy, and that's normal, isn't it. It is not absolutely A-okay not to drink alcohol. On the obsessive side. *Darling, of course there are people watching.*

Let me tell you about the clinical disco while Eddie finishes his game of darts. He hates darts but darts are what men do in pubs, okay? The clinical disco is what they have once a month at Broadmoor. (Yes, that place. Broadmoor. The secure hospital for the criminally insane.) You didn't know they had women there? They do. One woman to every nine men. They often don't look all that like women when they go in, but they sure as hell look like them when (and if, if, if, if, if, if, if) they go out.

How did I get to be in there? You really want to know? I'd been having this crummy time at home and this crummy time at work. I was married to this guy I loved, God knows why, in retrospect, but I did, only he fancied my mother, and he got her pregnant — while I was out at work — did you know women can get pregnant at 50? He didn't, she didn't, I didn't — but she was! My mum said he only married me to be near her anyway and I was the one ought to have an abortion. So I did. It went wrong and messed me up inside, so I couldn't have babies, and my mum said what did it matter, I was a lesbian anyway, just look at me. I got the scar in a road accident, in case you're wondering. And I thought what the hell, who wants a man, who wants a mother, and walked out on them. And I was working at the Royal Opera House for this man who was a real pain, and you know how these places get: the dramas and the rows and the overwork and the underpay and the show must go on, though you're dropping dead. Dropping dead babies. No, I'm not crying. What do you think I am, a depressive! I'm as normal as the next person.

What I did was set fire to the office. Just an impulse. I was having these terrible pains

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and he made me work late. He said it was my fault Der Rosenkavalier's wig didn't fit: He said I'd made his opera house an international laughing stock : it slipped and the *New York Times* jeered. But it wasn't my fault about the wig: wardrobe had put the message through to props, not administration. And I sat in front of the VDU — the union are against them: they cause infertility in women but what employer's going to bother about a thing like that — they prefer everyone childless anyday — and thought about my husband and my mum, five months pregnant, and lit a cigarette. I'd given up smoking for a whole year but this business at home had made me start again. Have you ever had an abortion at five months? No? Not many have.

How's your drink? How's Eddie getting on with the darts? Started another game? That's A-okay, that's fine by me, that's normal.

So what were we saying, Linda? Oh yes, arson. That's what they called it. I just moved my cigarette lighter under the curtains and they went up, whoosh, and that caught some kind of soundproof ceiling in-fill they use these days instead of plaster. Up it all went. Whoosh again. £400 worth of damage. Or so they said. If you ask me, they were glad of the excuse to redecorate.

Like a fool, instead of lying and just saying it was an accident, I said I'd done it on purpose, I was glad I had, opera was a waste of public funds, and working late a waste of my life. That was before I got to court. The solicitor laddie warned me off. He said arson was no laughing matter, they came down very hard on arson. I thought a fine, perhaps: he said no, prison. Years not months.

You know my mum didn't even come to the hearing? She had a baby girl. I thought there might be something wrong with it, my mum being so old, but there wasn't. Perhaps the father being so young made up for it.

There was a barrister chappie, he said, look you've been upset, you are upset, all this business at home, the thing for you to do is plead insane; we'll get you sent to Broadmoor, it's the best place in the country for psychiatric care, they'll have you right in the head in no time. Otherwise it's Holloway, and that's all strip cells and major tranquillisers, and not so much a short sharp shock as a long sharp shock. Years, it could be, arson.

So that's what I did, I pleaded insane, and got an indefinite sentence, which meant into Broadmoor until such time I was cured and safe to be let out into the world again. I never was unsafe. You know what one of those famous opera singers said when she heard what I'd done? 'Good for Philly,' she said. 'Best thing that could possibly happen: the whole place razed to the ground!'

Only of course it wasn't even razed to the ground, just one room already in need of redecoration slightly blackened. When did I realise I'd made a mistake? The minute I saw Broadmoor: a great black pile: the second I got into this reception room. There were three women nurses in there, standing around a bath of hot water; great hefty women and male nurses too, and they were talking and laughing. Well, not exactly laughing, an Inside equivalent, a sort of heavy grunting ha-ha-ha they manage, half way between sex and hate. They didn't even look at me as I came in. I was terrified, you can imagine. One of them said 'strip' over their shoulder and I just stood there not believing it. So she barked 'strip' again, so I took off a cardigan and my shoes, and then one of them just ripped everything off me and pushed my legs apart and yanked out a Tampax — sorry about this, Linda — and threw it in a bin and dunked me in the bath without even seeing me. Do you know what's worse than being naked and seen by strangers, including men strangers? It's

'Darling, of course there are people watching'

being naked and unseen, because you don't even count as a woman. Why men? In case the women patients are uncontrollable. The bath was dirty. So were the nurses. I asked for a sanitary towel but no one replied. I don't know if they were being cruel: I don't think they thought that what came out of my mouth was words. Well I was mad, wasn't I? That's why I was there. I was mad because I was a patient, I was wicked because I was a prisoner: they were sane because they were nurses and good because they could go home after work.

Linda, is that guy over there in the suit watching? No? You're sure?

They didn't go far, mind you, most of them. They lived, breathed, slept The Hospital. Whole families of nurses live in houses at the foot of the great Broadmoor wall. They intermarry. Complain about one; not complain even — just go for help, because someone's being tortured, tormented, mocked — and you find you're talking to the cousin/aunt/lover/best friend of the complainee. You learn to shut up: you learn to smile: I was a tea-bag for the whole of one day and never stopped smiling from dawn to dusk. That's right, I was a tea-bag. Nurse Kelly put a wooden frame round my shoulders and hung a piece of gauze front and back and said 'you be a tea-bag all day' so I was. How we all laughed. Why did he want me to be a tea-bag? It was his little joke. They get bored, you see. They look to the patients for entertainment.

Treatment? Linda, I saw one psychiatrist six times and I was there three years. The men do better. They have rehabilitation programmes, ping-pong, carpentry and we all get videos. Only the men get to choose the video and they always choose blue films. They have to choose them to show they're normal, and the women have to choose not to see them to show the same. You have to be normal to get out. Sister in the ward fills in the report cards. She's the one who decides whether or not you're sane enough to go before the Parole Committee. The trouble is, she's not so sane herself. She's more institutionalised than the patients.

Eddie, come and join us! How was your game? You won? Better not do that too often. You don't want to be seen as an over-achiever. This is Linda, I'm telling her how we met. At the clinical disco. Shall we do a little dance, just the pair of us, in the middle of everything and everyone, to celebrate being out? No, you're right, that would be just plain mad. Eddie and I love each other, Linda, we met at the clinical disco, down Broadmoor way. Who knows, the doctor may have been wrong about me not having babies, stranger things happen. My mum ran out on my ex, leaving him to look after the baby: he came to visit me in Broadmoor once and asked me to go back to him, but I wouldn't. Sister put me back for that: a proper woman wants to go back to her husband, even though he's her little sister's father. And after he'd gone I cried. You must never cry in Broadmoor. It means you're depressed; and that's the worst madness of all. The staff all love it in there, and think you're really crazy if you don't. I guess they get kind of offended if you cry. So it's on with the lipstick — that's the first step to a real cure — and smile, smile, smile, though everyone around you is ballooning with largactyl and barking like the dogs they think they are.

I tell you something, Linda, these places are mad houses and never, never, plead the balance of your mind is disturbed in court: get a prison sentence and relax, and wait for time to pass and one day you'll be free. But once you're in a secure hospital, you may never get out at all, and they fill the women up with so many tranquillisers, you may never be fit to. The drugs give you brain damage. But I reckon I'm all right; my hands tremble a bit, and my mouth twitches sometimes but it's not too bad. And I'm still *me*, aren't I. Eddie's fine — they don't give men so much, sometimes none at all. Only you never know what's in the tea. But you can't be seen not drinking it because that's paranoia.

Eddie says I should sue the Barrister, with his fine talk of therapy and treatment in Broadmoor, but I reckon I won't. Once you've been in you're never safe. They can pop you back inside if you cause any trouble at all, and they're the ones who decide what trouble is. So we keep our mouths shut, and our noses clean, us ex-inmates of Broadmoor.

Are you sure that man's not watching? Is

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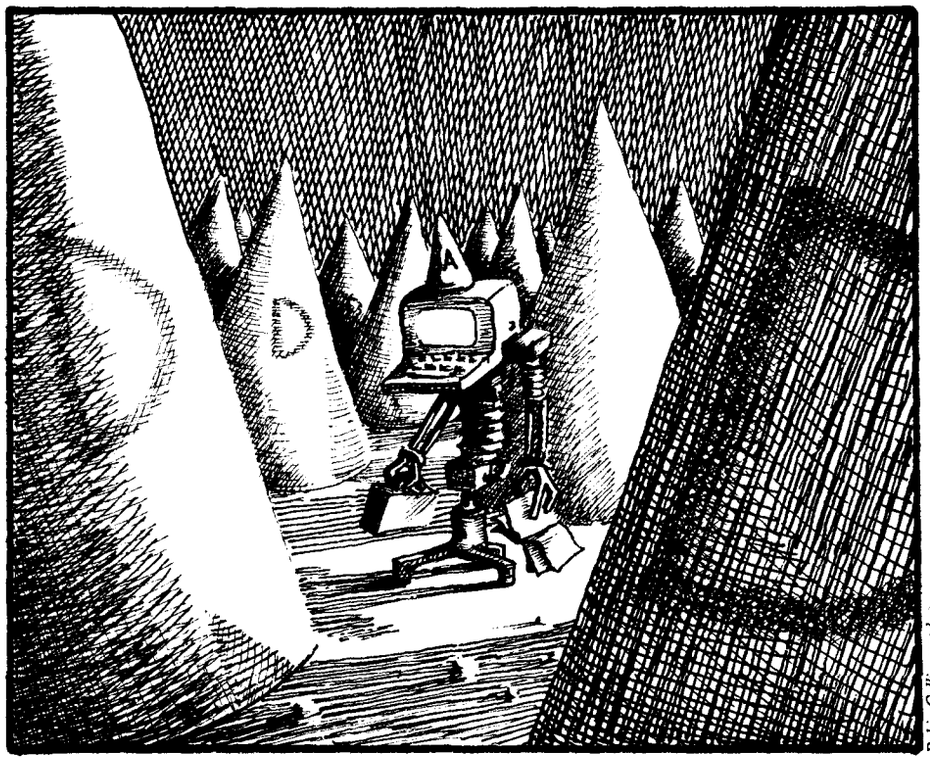
there something wrong with us? Eddie? You're not wearing your ear-ring, are you? Turn your head. No, that's all right. We look just like everyone else? Don't we? Is my lipstick smudged? Christ, I hate wearing it. It makes my eyes look small.

At the clinical disco! They hold them at Broadmoor every month. Lots of the men in there are sex offenders, rapists, mass murderers, torturers, child abusers, flashers. The staff like to see how they're getting on, how they react to the opposite sex, and on the morning of the disco sister turns up and says 'you go', and 'you' and 'you' and of course you can't say no, no matter how scared you are. Because you're supposed to want to dance. And the male staff gee up the men — hey, look at those titties!, wouldn't you like to look up *that* skirt, and stand by looking forward to the trouble, a bit of living porno, better than a blue film any day. And they gee up the women too: wow, there's a handsome hunk of male: and you have to act interested, because that's normal: if they think you're a lezzie you never get out. So do the men. Eddie and I met at the clinical disco, acting interested. Eddie felt up my titties, and I rubbed myself against him and the staff watched and all of a sudden he said, 'Hey, I mean really,' and I said 'Hi', and he said 'sorry about this, keep smiling', and I said 'ditto, what are you in for?' and he said 'I got a job as a woman teacher. Six little girls framed me. But I love teaching, not little girls. There was just no job for a man,' and I believed him: nobody else ever had. And I told him about my mum and my ex, and he seemed to understand. Didn't you, Eddie! That's love, you see. Love at first sight. You're just on the other person's side, and if you can find someone else like that about you, everything falls into place. We were both out in three months. It didn't matter for once if I wore lipstick, it didn't matter to him he had to watch blue films: you stop thinking that acting sane is driving you mad: you don't have not to cry because you stop wanting to cry: the barking and howling and screeching stops worrying you; I guess when you're in love you're just happy so they have to turn you out; because your being happy shows them up. If you're happy, what does sane or insane mean, what are their lives all about? They can't bear to see it.

Linda, it's been great meeting you. Eddie and I are off home now. I've talked too much. Sorry. When we're our side of our front door I scrub off the make-up and get into jeans and he gets into drag, and we're ourselves, and we just hope no one comes knocking on the door to say, hey that's not normal, back to Broadmoor, but I reckon love's a talisman. If we hold on to that, we'll be okay. □

'Down the Clinical Disco' will be included in Passion Fruit, *a collection of stories for Valentine's Day, to be published by Pandora on 6 February 1986.*



Robin Collingwood

All in the A-team

Peter Wilsher

Metamagical Themas: Questing for the Essence of Mind and Pattern
DOUGLAS R. HOFSTADTER *Viking* £18.95

HOFSTADTER, WHO first shot to fame and unlikely best-sellerdom by sharing his interlinked obsessions with the works of Gödel, Escher and Bach, is here obsessed, centrally, with the nature of the letter A. How is it, he asks, and keeps circling back to the question by a variety of oblique and tortuous mental routes, that the human mind can unerringly recognise the A-ish-ness of a particular visual pattern however wildly it is embroidered with serifs, curlicues and distortions, while a computer, however richly you feed it with recognition-formulae, is incapable of duplicating this apparently rather mundane feat.

Certainly you can write programmes whereby the machine can identify vast numbers, even infinite numbers, of different As. But although, at first sight, it appears quite simple to frame a water-tight mathematical definition which will embrace all possible variations while excluding any possible confusion with B, or H, or W, it has proved so far quite beyond the artificial-intelligence researchers' powers. Whatever aspects of the letter-form that are selected as basis for a definition — the point at the top, the horizontal cross bar, the equal slope of the outside lines or the balance of black and white within the perceived vision field, they all turn out to be laughably incomplete and non-exclusive. Any artist, with a flick of the pencil, can produce As with three vertices or none, double and treble crossbars at any angle to be found on a protractor, and gradations of shading which send contrast-meters into a nervous decline. Yet the result is likely to remain instantly and unambiguously recognisable by any toddler who has got beyond its first alphabet book. So just what is it that the infant on the very threshold of literacy can achieve without a conscious thought, while the best of IBM and MIT combined is left floundering at the starting-line?

Around this, and similar enquiries, Hofstadter weaves a series of lightly-written but frequently profound meditations on the workings of the human brain, particularly in the area of imagination and creativity, and tries to pin down his own reasons for scepticism over the proposition that machines which can already give the appearance of playing first-class chess and making plausible pastiches of political speeches are about to make the ultimate breakthrough into independent thinking-power. Being himself, when he is not writing — as here — for a large popular audience, a leading proponent of artificial-intelligence research, he is far from taking the brusquely dismissive line on this put forward by people like last year's Reith lecturer, Professor John Searle. But equally, he rejects the full-blooded enthusiasts exemplified by Herbert Simon, who believe that success is just round the corner and that all the conceptual problems of understanding, replicating and outdistancing human thought-

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capability are on the point of being solved.

His own position is most cogently and extensively set out in the book's central chapter, which he calls, in characteristic Hofstadter-speak, 'Waking up from the Boolean Dream, or Subcognition as Computation'. George Boole, of course, for those who need a pocket-calculator to work out the price of four 49p lbs of sugar, was the 19th-century inventor of symbolic logic, whose vision, embodied in the title of his 1850 masterpiece, *The Laws of Thought*, is precisely what the artificial-intelligence industry is attempting to realise.

Its successes, which underpin the belief that the general cognition-creation problem is close to being cracked, have been, as far as they go, quite remarkable. There is no doubt that machines can do some things — complex differential equations, advanced medical diagnosis, analysing 10 moves ahead at the chess board – which human beings find awesomely difficult if not actually impossible. But as Hofstadter cogently argues, that is nowhere near the essence of the matter. The real human achievement, shared by not just a select few super-specialists but by all four billion of us, is in that diffuse, under-regarded area casually designated as 'common sense'.

Computers can achieve remarkable feats of pattern-recognition, which is what artificial thought basically boils down to, but only when they have been told pretty precisely what to look for and, even more important, roughly where to look for it. But that is not what people do at all.

> People perceive patterns everywhere and anywhere, without knowing in advance where to look. People learn automatically in all aspects of life. Common sense is not an 'area of expertise', but a general — that is domain-independent — capacity which has to do with fluidity in recognition of concepts, an ability to sift what is important from what is not, an ability to find unanticipated analogical similarities between totally different concepts. We have a long way to go before our programmes exhibit this cognitive style.

That, it seems to me, is as fair a summary as anyone has come up with so far of the gulf between the semiconductor-based type of brain and the only-too-fallible but still amazingly resourceful neuron-based kind that we are stuck with. As Hofstadter briskly sums it up: 'Asking for a programme that can discover new scientific laws without having a programme that can, say, do anagrams, is like wanting to go to the moon without having the ability to find your way around town.' Or to recognise your mother across a crowded room. Or write a limerick in your head while you are absent-mindedly doing the washing up. Or finding your way through a forest on an overgrown path marked on an out-of-date ordnance map. Maybe these hardly sound like Fifth Generation attainments. But only when Cray and Wang and Fujitsu can come up with a software package to match them, will it be time to think about resigning in their favour. Meanwhile we have the pleasure of reading Hofstadter, on a tumbling galaxy of loosely related topics from Rubic icosahedrons to the application of the 'Prisoner's Dilemma' problem (are my interests best served by supporting or shopping my accomplice?) to the resolution of the nuclear impasse. It will be quite a time, I suspect, before his versatility can be subsumed in some sort of 'Speak and Spell' machine. □

'News sense'

Michael Leapman

News, Newspapers and Television
ALASTAIR HETHERINGTON
Macmillan £27.50 & £9.50

I WAS TALKING the other day to a man who helped run Labour Party publicity in the Sixties. He recalled meeting a BBC executive who had told him: 'We must be doing something right. We haven't had a complaint from you chaps about bias for a long time.' The Labour man bridled. 'We'll soon do something about that,' he promised. Within days, protests were winging their way to the Beeb — too much time given to a Tory here, an unfortunate nuance by a TV reporter there . . . and so on.

Complaints about unfair reporting have to be examined in the context that no competent politician will ever admit to being properly treated. What is in it for them? As well expect a soccer player to confess that the referee is on his side. The miners' leaders maintain that distorted coverage of their strike was partly responsible for its defeat. Had they won, it would have been *despite* the media conspiracy. Yet Ian MacGregor must also have recognised that his own public image was a lot less favourable when the strike ended than when it began.

This is not to argue that there is no bias in press and television nor that it is a waste of time to try to detect it. Alastair Hetherington, the former editor of the *Guardian*, devotes an important section of this book to just such an endeavour in relation to the coal strike. He concludes that the TV reporting was fair, accurate and non-partisan, but criticises the lack of any investigation into suggestions that the initial announcements of pit closures were deliberately timed to provoke the union. He also noted a tendency to play down TV reports implying criticism of the police.

Broadly similar conclusions are reached in the chapter on newspaper coverage of the dispute, contributed by Innis Macbeath, former labour editor of *The Times*. He admires the professionalism of the labour reporters working on the story and describes in some detail the physical difficulties they encountered. Where both he and Hetherington are reticent, however, is in analysing decisions made at the executive level on the prominence to be given to the story and what aspects of it to stress. They do not reveal — presumably because nobody would tell them — what contacts there were between senior media executives and officials of the Coal Board and Government.

Macbeath gives a tantalising hint of this much more interesting story when describing the threat of a strike by NACODS, the pit deputies' union. The first edition of *The Times* on 18 October 1984 carried on its front page a by-lined report that the coal industry would come to a halt in a few days after a vote by NACODS to strike. This was replaced in the last edition by an anonymous report on moves to head off the strike. It suggested that many NACODS members were unhappy with the prospect. Who had changed the emphasis of the story and why? Had there been a call from the Coal Board? The question is not addressed.

The following week the *Daily Express* reported that Ian MacGregor would give in to the deputies' demands, so as to avoid a total shutdown. Sir Larry Lamb, the editor, laughed off a denial by the Board, because 'evidently' he had been talking to MacGregor. Why 'evidently'? What does the author know that he is not telling us?

The first part of the book is an account of several days and nights spent by Hetherington and a researcher inside newspaper offices in an attempt to find out how decisions about news priorities are reached. The *Sun*, *Telegraph* and *Express* would not co-operate, which detracts somewhat from the worth of the research — and, in the case of the *Sun*, from its entertainment value.

In a personal postscript, Hetherington points us to a more serious weakness in his method. Several journalists he interviewed criticised him for trying to categorise and define judgments that they make instinctively. Ask editors why they have chosen this story to lead the paper above that one and they will think of any number of impressively plausible reasons. What they will not do is disclose the weight of prejudices and assumptions, some of them unconscious, that make up what they call their news sense.

As an ex-editor, Hetherington is too ready to accept 'news sense' as an objective phenomenon.

Last song

Fleur Adcock

Goodbye, sweet symmetry. Goodbye, sweet
world
of mirror-images and matching halves,
where animals have usually four legs
and people nearly always two;
where birds and bats and butterflies and bees
have balanced wings, and even flies
can fly straight if they try. Goodbye
to one-a-side for eyes and ears and arms
and breasts and balls and shoulder-blades
and hands; goodbye to the straight line
drawn down the central spine,
making us double in a world
where oddness is acceptable only
under the sea, for the lop-sided lobster,
the wonky oyster, the creepily rotated
flatfish with both eyes over one gill;
goodbye to the sweet certitudes of our
mammalian order, where to be
born with one eye or three thumbs
points to not being human. It will come.

In the next world, when this one's gone skew-
whiff,
we shall be algae or lichen, things
we've hardly even needed to pronounce.
If the flounder still exists it will be king.

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His research at *The Times* coincided with the start of the 1984 Chesterfield by-election campaign, where Tony Benn was the Labour candidate. On Tuesday, 14 February, the only mention of the campaign on *The Times* front page was a brief report that Peter Tatchell, the loser of Bermondsey, had been canvassing in Chesterfield but was asked to leave. The campaigning itself, highlighted by Benn's promise to support the Labour leadership, was relegated to page 2.

Hetherington merrily dismisses the Tatchell story as an 'irrelevant diversion'. He offers no criticism of *The Times* for deciding to include on its front page a trivial report whose intention could only be to embarrass the Labour Party. The incident was worth front-page coverage only if you accept the knee-jerk Fleet Street reaction: Benn loony, Tatchell loonier.

Political prejudice should not colour news judgment but it does, both at *The Times* and at the *Daily Mail*, a paper that Hetherington appears to admire greatly. In a chapter that reads in part like a showbiz hagiography, he paints an heroic picture of the *Mail*'s tough and loyal news team, masterminded by old trouper Sir David English with his well-tried repertoire of impeccable judgments and Tory prejudices.

English admitted to some political bias but told Hetherington: 'Professional standards say that you must not deliberately distort or invent or twist events to give a completely unfair or untruthful version.' That word 'completely' is the giveaway. Is a *partially* unfair version OK?

The research data in this lively book will prove valuable to students of the media. Its weakness is that Hetherington, as an old Fleet Street hand, is too ready to accept journalists and their motives at their own evaluation. □

FICTION

It's a crime

Joan Smith

The Face of Death
LESLEY GRANT-ADAMSON *Faber* £9.95
Dead of Winter
FORBES BRAMBLE *Hamish Hamilton* £8.95
Fate Worse Than Death
SHEILA RADLEY *Constable* £7.95
Dead Giveaway
SIMON BRETT *Gollancz* £7.95
Death of a Dancing Lady
RAY HARRISON *Quartet* £8.95

THE PUBLISHERS of these five books describe them variously as crime novels, an adventure, a psychological thriller and a detective story. In his history of the crime story, *Bloody Murder* (Viking, £10.95), Julian Symons argues that such classifications are 'more confusing than helpful', and the point is certainly borne out by this selection from the genre. If the reader carried out a blind tasting, so to speak, I very much doubt whether he or she would score anything like five out of five in linking book to publisher's description.

Clifford Harper

Take **The Face of Death**, for instance. The jacket labels Lesley Grant-Adamson's second novel 'a gripping psychological thriller'. Now the term 'thriller' is firmly linked in my mind with international conspiracies, terrorists and multiple shootings — the sort of thing written by Frederick Forsyth or Ken Follett. *The Face of Death* is actually a claustrophobic domestic drama, and none the worse for it.

The plot is simple. A hospital patient who has lost her memory after a road accident is taken home to a house on the outskirts of London by a man who claims to be her husband. As the days pass, she is puzzled and then alarmed by his resolute refusal to help her recall her past life. The major difference between this book and the other four is that this one relies on suspense rather than the gradual revelation of a mystery to hold the reader. That does not make it any the less a crime novel and rather a good one. My only criticism is that 302 pages is a long time to keep the suspense going and the book has a slight tendency to sag in the middle.

Not so Forbes Bramble's **Dead of Winter**, a tersely written story which begins with a murder on Christmas Eve. The publisher uses the old-fashioned phrase 'detective story' to describe this book, and it certainly shares many of the hallmarks of an Agatha Christie or Dorothy L. Sayers. The murder takes place in a village church, with a large number of suspects conveniently in attendance, and it takes all the efforts of several amateur and professional detectives to solve it. The reader is even supplied with that most unfashionable of aids, a plan of the locality.

What lifts Bramble's book out of the ordinary is his ability to evoke time and place with an economical use of words which never obstructs the plot. His descriptions of the snowbound English village are at once a delight to read and a device which renders the subsequent violence particularly shocking.

Sheila Radley's fifth 'crime novel' — a sensible publisher here, I'm glad to say — is also set in an English village, but with less happy results. **Fate Worse Than Death** is all the more disappointing because of the quality of her four earlier novels featuring more or less the same group of characters, Detective Chief Inspector Douglas Quantrill, his family and his colleagues.

Fate Worse Than Death is set in a Suffolk village at the height of summer. Beryl Websdell's daughter has disappeared only days before she was due to get married and no one knows whether she has gone of her own accord or is the victim of something far more sinister. Into the village comes Martin Tait, a cocky police inspector who appeared in a more junior rank in the earlier novels. Tait happens to be on holiday, but it is inevitable that he is drawn into the investigation, under Quantrill, of Sandra Websdell's disappearance.

The problem is that Radley allows the characters and their personal lives to become more important than the crime the novel is ostensibly about. The focus of the book is the affair between Quantrill's daughter, Alison, and Martin Tait; the mystery stays very much in the background and the novel suffers as a result. This fate tends to befall crime writers when they start to worry about the relationship between their own work and the novel proper, whatever that may be, or even art. I hope that Sheila Radley has merely taken a wrong turning on the road to consolidating her reputation as an above average crime writer.

But at least Sheila Radley's novel has characters. Simon Brett's latest offering is notable for the fact that it doesn't. **Dead Giveaway** is set in the world of television game shows and the people who feature in it are no more than a series of relentless caricatures. This goes as much for Brett's amateur detective, actor Charles Paris, as it does for the unattractive band of celebrities, television researchers and avaricious members of the public which makes up the supporting cast. Brett's reputation rests

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on his ability to combine crime with light comedy but this time it just doesn't work. As I approached the end of this 'adventure', I neither knew nor cared who the murderer was.

I always approach crime novels set in Victorian England with mixed feelings. When they work, they're very, very good — Peter Lovesey's Sergeant Cribb books are an outstanding example. Julian Symons has also been very successful in this field. The stuffy atmosphere of the period, its double standards concealing a seething cauldron of crime, is an ideal backdrop for the genre. Unfortunately, Ray Harrison's **Death of a Dancing Lady** just fails to bring it off.

There is nothing wrong with Harrison's plot. The murders take place against the background of a complicated but well-explained marine fraud, which centres on the loss of a ship called the *Dancing Lady*. They are competently investigated by two policemen, Sergeant Bragg and Constable Morton, who appear in Harrison's three earlier Victorian crime novels. The fault lies in the thought processes of the main characters, whose minds seem to work in a curiously 20th-century way. Somehow, the idea of a Victorian lady discussing whether a Victorian PC is an 'emotional cripple' just does not ring true. □

Hearing aids

Andrew Clements

Busoni the Composer
ANTONY BEAUMONT *Faber* £35
Olivier Messiaen and the Music of Time
PAUL GRIFFITHS *Faber* £17.50
Gustav Mahler, Volume III: Songs and Symphonies of Life and Death
DONALD MITCHELL *Faber* £35

ANTONY BEAUMONT'S **Busoni** fills a genuine gap in the literature of 20th-century music. The main reference until now has been Edward Dent's biography, published as long ago as 1933; that, however, contains no detail on the music itself. Beaumont has consciously tailored his study as a complement to Dent, compressing biographical information into a short chronology and offering instead a work-by-work discussion that leaves nothing of substance unexplored. Almost everything he mentions is hardly ever played; a Busoni revival has been constantly promised, and indeed English National Opera is staging his masterpiece *Doktor Faust* next spring. But it seems to me that in the 50-odd years since Dent's book first appeared Busoni's reputation has neither prospered nor decayed; he has remained where I suspect he will always be found, on the periphery of 20th-century music, prefiguring many of its 'isms' yet ultimately committing himself to none, formulating his own detailed aesthetic yet never putting it convincingly into practice in his works.

There is a great body of music which is totally unknown today; some of it certainly deserves exhumation. Wisely Beaumont does not plunge into detailed analysis of scores for which the reader will have few points of reference. His treatment is essentially descriptive, but it is still sometimes heavy going. To lead a potential audience through music it does not know requires a lively style and a sense of crusading zeal; though I don't doubt Beaumont's commitment to Busoni's cause he is not always successful in transmitting his enthusiasm. Certainly I would like to hear something of the operas apart from *Faust*, and pieces such as the *Red Indian Fantasy*, but they intrigued me before I read this book. While it is going to be intensely valuable when an oddity does come along, I cannot see it furthering Busoni's music as a performable commodity, and to that extent I fear it has failed in at least one of its objectives.

Messiaen's position in the scheme of contemporary music is assured, as much by his importance as the teacher of three generations of European composers from Boulez and Stockhausen to Murail and Benjamin, as by the achievement of his own music. Paul Griffiths stakes his claim for Messiaen's significance in his title: the deliberate absence of development in the music, its reliance on repetition, denies the listener the sense of uni-directional time, of music whose goal is fixed and attainable. Only in the final pages of his book, however, does Griffiths allow himself to dilate upon the real stuff of Messiaen. The rest is taken up with brief analyses of each of the major works, and expositions of Messiaen's theories of rhythm and harmony. The treatments tend to become less substantial as the huge compositions of the 1960s and '70s are approached, and those on *Des canyons aux étoiles* and (especially) the opera *Saint François d'Assise* are disappointingly thin. Griffiths could not gain access to a score of the opera when he was writing his book, for publication is not planned for several years, but the work is so crucial to Messiaen's development, so much a conscious summation of his creative and religious life, that a comprehensive study of the composer is necessarily marred without an examination of it in some detail. As it stands *Olivier Messiaen and the Music of Time* adds relatively little to what could already be gleaned from earlier books by Robert Sherlaw Johnson and Roger Nichols, and particularly from the composer's own theoretical writings.

In this triumvirate of authors Griffiths stands half-way between Beaumont's non-analytical approach and the extremely detailed analysis of Donald Mitchell. Mitchell's previous Mahler volumes ran nicely in chronological sequence, and volume II left the composer after the composition of the Fourth Symphony. Now, though, the sequence is broken, for *Songs and Symphonies of Life and Death* leapfrogs the purely instrumental symphonies 5, 6 and 7 to fasten upon the Eighth and particularly *Das Lied von der Erde*, together with the *Kindertotenlieder* and *Rückertlieder* in which Mitchell demonstrates the seeds of the later great song cycle.

It is a huge, sprawling book, crammed with the most minute discussions of every aspect of those compositions. I think no book I have read on any composer brings one closer to the act of composition itself, to imagining the creative decisions that occupied Mahler, especially in *Das Lied*. Mitchell shows more clearly than ever how acutely sensitive Mahler could be to every nuance of his texts and how the expressive world of the Chinese poems he used in *Das Lied* shaped and ordered the form and language of the song-symphony. To look for models for that unique form or to try to superimpose upon it received notions of symphonic structures is misconceived. If ever a book forced one to reconsider every detail of a masterpiece it is this; there is more here about *Das Lied von der Erde* than probably most listeners will want to know, but those who persevere with the minutiae will find their comprehension immeasurably deepened. □

The kiss

(Constantin Brancusi *The Kiss* 1908 (stone))

Vicki Feaver

The lovers are stuck
lip to lip
eyeball to eyeball
until the end of time.

The sculptor has given them
what they wanted
in their first ecstacy:
never to be apart.

But the guard
who patrols at night
swears he has heard
raised voices in the stone.

Books alive

David Montrose

A Man of Letters: Selected Essays
V. S. PRITCHETT *Chatto* £12.95

V. S. PRITCHETT belongs to the old school of literary criticism. Resolutely unacademic, he does not offer recondite analyses or spectacular revaluations; he aims to engage the interest of the common reader by fulfilling Edmund Wilson's criteria: to describe not only what the book concerned says but how it is written, what sort of temperament the author has and what sort of effect he or she produces. Pritchett combines a gift for generalisation with an ability to pick out the specifics that really matter. And, as Paul Theroux has remarked, he brings to criticism the vividness of fiction. In an essay on *Tristram Shandy*, he characterises Sterne's fictional creations as living 'shut up in the asylum of their own imaginations, oysters itching voluptuously upon the pearl within'. Such deft evocations recur throughout *A Man of Letters*: George Sand's 'people and landscapes are silhouettes

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Four poems by John Gurney

Eileen

Eileen has been different since she found
the young man who was hanging from a line
six feet above the river. He had wound
the tough strands of a life-belt's rope of twine
around his neck. She found him in the mist,
in windlessness, immobile, willow-still,
unable to continue, to resist
the great surd of existence. Twisted, ill,
married just a month, and unemployed,
and suffering from sudden jealous fits,
he'd turned upon himself, and so destroyed
all Eileen's frail composure. Now she sits
and cannot start her work. Her motive's gone.
At times she looks an utter simpleton.

Jean

The quiet scholastic ambience has not
rubbed off on Jean, the cleaner. Half-berserk,
a bent half-inch of ash hangs from her hot
discoloured lips. She sweats, for life is work.
Lecturer and student, both alike
mean dirt to her. Her dyed hair thick with grime
she plies her heavy bumper, strike by strike,
with one eye on her bonus. Now it's time
to shed some staff. They say the list's been made.
She's fifty now, and been here since the start.
The Union says, 'Keep quiet!' She's not afraid,
but swear she must. 'This job's not worth a fart!
Redundancies? My arse! Who bloody cares?'
Rising, oath by oath, she climbs the stairs.

The bird of consolation

God himself does not know who he is
John Scotus Eriugena once confessed
in 877. In this
Quaker meeting, silently addressed
by silence, the statement of his sentence
keeps returning and recurring through the still
unnerving search of Nothing, the intense
uneven human breathing. Just until
a man stands up in suffering, brilliant red,
and blurts about a swallow he observed.
It flew in through the window, brushed his head,
fluttered past the curtains, banked and swerved
then vanished in the garden. Now he sits.
We lapse back into silence. Nothing fits.

The tall girl

Normally I'm hardly conscious of my
body. It seems that I transcend it. I
am far too busy, far more occupied
with what I find around me. Usually
it does not seem a real material fact
but just a mode of presence. Till she comes,
arriving, say, some thirty minutes late
to throw down her umbrella, bite her thumb,
and stare. Yes. The tall girl. Now she laughs.
Some nights she cannot sleep. This was one. Then
she chatters to her mother's photographs
who died when she was four. The guilt remains.
Two palmists have agreed, and eased her fears,
that she will live for many happy years.

seen in streams of sheet lightning'; Arnold Bennett is 'a kind of estate agent's valuer walking with perfunctory tread through the rooms of our lives . . .'

These qualities originally flowered more or less by chance. The scarcity of new books during the last war meant that Pritchett usually devoted the leading literary article he wrote almost every week for the *New Statesman* to a re-crossing of his favourite territory: the English, French and Russian prose classics. In the process, as Pritchett records in his autobiography, 'a critic emerged from the hack'. Being able to assume that his readers had some acquaintanceship with the authors and books involved made it easier for him to share his knowledge and his impressions: he could start farther away from scratch, be allusive rather than word-wastefully explicit, cover more ground. This selection includes essays from those years on Fielding, *Clarissa*, *Tristram Shandy*, Scott, Thomas Love Peacock and Lermontov.

Since the war, of course, new books have flooded out, but among them have always been enough reissues, critical studies and biographies to enable Pritchett regularly to address the subjects he enjoys most. Over the same period, he has also dipped into the literatures of other countries (notably the USA) and of more recent times, in addition to — a particular speciality — intermittently resurrecting neglected minor novelists. Though largely admirable, Pritchett's work in these fields rarely comprises his very best: his responses are generally not quite so acute and wide-ranging, chiefly because, dealing with lesser known or newly published books, his scope as an essayist is circumscribed by an obligation to perform the more mundane duties of a reviewer, too.

A Man of Letters spans 45 years of distinguished critical activity — and constitutes a disappointment. The trouble is that its compilation has been the outcome of contradictory impulses. For one thing, the volume is intended to bring together a selection of Pritchett's 'finest and most representative work'. And because his finest work fails to reflect his range, it is diluted by a number of essays that fall into the 'merely' admirable category (and a few, especially those on Edith Wharton and Robert Musil, which are less than admirable). Instances of Pritchett at peak form — on, among others, George Eliot, Trollope and the 18th-century eccentric Thomas Day — are joined by 'second-rate' pieces on, among others, Cyril Connolly, Faulkner and the Brazilian novelist, Machado de Assis.

The resultant anthology, however, is by no means a true cross-section. In particular, only ten of the 46 essays cover French and Russian literature, an under-representation — nothing on his esteemed Zola, for example, nothing on Chekhov — further weakened due to Pritchett having taken the opportunity offered by the volume to round up 18 essays omitted from his six previous collections or written since the last of them, *The Tale Bearers*, appeared in 1980. Their subjects include Balzac, Stendhal, Pushkin, Dostoevsky and Turgenev and, as Pritchett has apparently decided that no author should feature more than once here, their presence debars earlier and better material. The same applies to Henry James.

A Man of Letters marks Pritchett's 85th birthday. Unfortunately, no common reader first encountering his criticism through it would receive a just impression of his achievement. A more appropriate tribute would have been a collection of his recent work accompanied by the republication — as attractive, affordable paperbacks — of its predecessors. □

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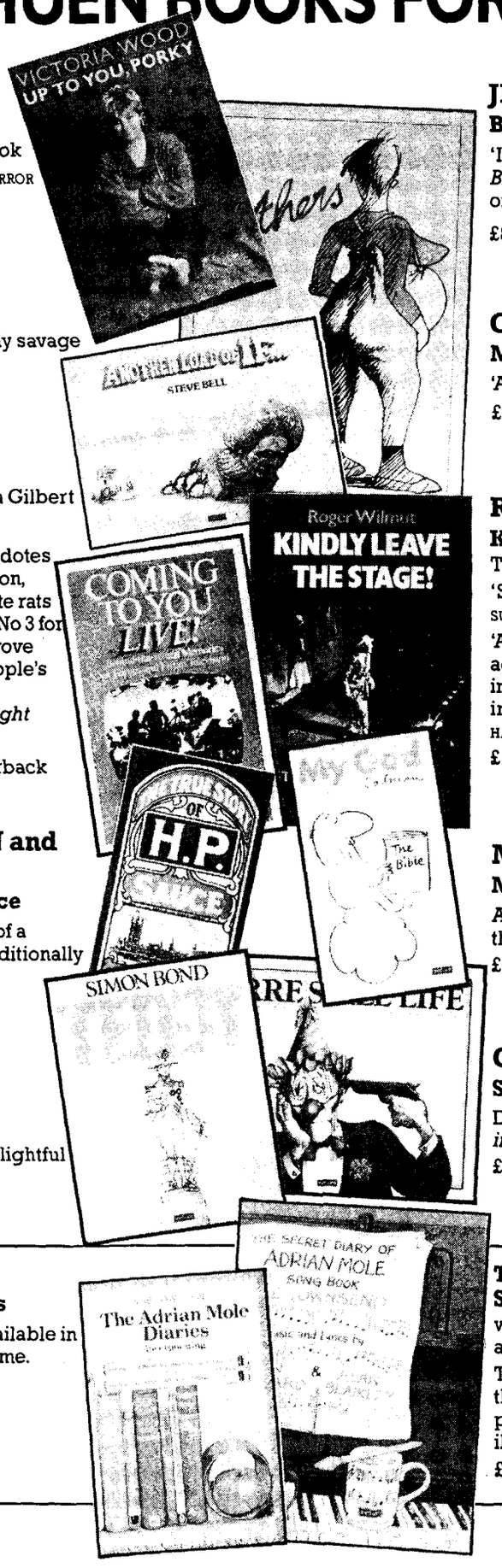

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The pleasures of reading 1985

Contributors were asked to choose the books — not necessarily published this year — which have given them most pleasure during the year.

My nude swim in the Pliocene with Elaine Morgan in her **The Descent of Woman** (Souvenir, £8.95 & £5.95) was my sexiest read of the year. We spent 12 million years by an African sea getting into shape for the Pleistocene rain which seems to have continued ever since. 'Elaine,' I said, 'a poor human sense of smell (p.100) seems to me a loony explanation for homosexual attraction.' But we parted friends. Written in '71 and now reissued.

Andrew Lumsden

Mes Nuits sont plus belles que vos jours by Raphaele Billetdoux (Grasset, 72f): a love story and psychological thriller, vigorous and lyrical, to remind us what the French novel can do when not disappearing up its own backside. A smack in the eye for the critical police, and a terrific read. Best poetry book of the year was Hugo Williams's autobiographical **Writing Home** (Oxford, £3.95), which remembers his actor father and the 1940s in vivid and unforgettable images.

Derek Mahon

Main treat: discovering Patrick Hamilton's unfinished sequence of novels about Ralph Ernest Gorse, via republished **The West Pier** (Viking, £8.95). Particular binge: Patricia Highsmith (esp. **The Glass Cell, Edith's Diary**). Novel: Jonathan Raban's **Foreign Land** (Collins/Harvill, £9.50) — never a duff word from this writer. New in paperback: Redmond O'Hanlon's **Into the Heart of Borneo** (sides still aching). But — inevitably, now — the year belongs to *Granta*, especially **Granta 15** and James Fenton's piece on Saigon.

Bill Greenwell

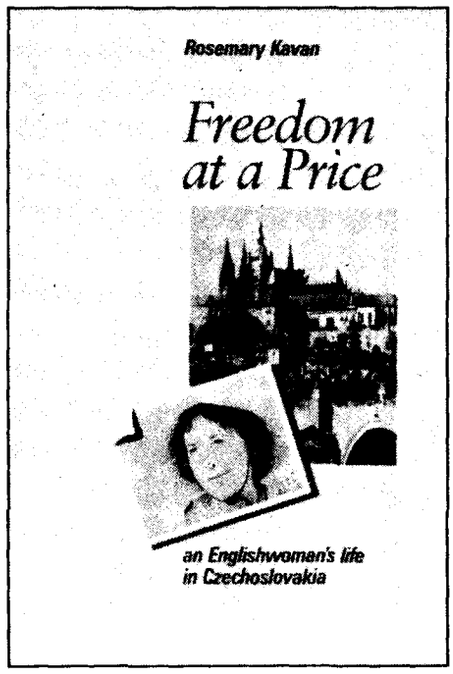
Pleasure? Unexpected, **The Wheel of Life** (Virago, £22), vol. 4 of Beatrice Webb's diaries, truly among the great English diaries; some Tory reviewers were petty and philistine. Scholarly pleasure, Edward Peters's **Torture** (Blackwell, £17.50 & £5.95); knockabout fun, Ernest Gellner's **The Psychoanalytic Movement** (Paladin, £3.50); pedantic pleasure, a catalogue from the wretched V & A, **English Caricature** (£6.95); and for *schadenfreude*, Steven Lukes and Itzhak Galpoor's **No Laughing Matter: A Collection of Political Jokes** (Routledge, £7.95) — a perfect cock-up!

Bernard Crick

David Marquand's **Ramsay MacDonald** (Cape, £15, first published 1977): a fair and sympathetic portrait of this brave, lonely, sad and finally tragic man and his perennially self-destructive party. **John Macnab** (Penguin, £2.50, first published 1925): John Buchan is always a genius at turning scenery into an adventure playground, but in this novel he also confronts and brilliantly objectifies in the plot the essential triviality of his self-esteeming heroes.

John Spurling

Books do furnish a life. Four in 1985 I'll keep for the rest of mine: Hugh Brogan's **History of the USA** (Longman) has all the sweep and vigour of its subject; Ben Pimlott's **Hugh Dalton** (Cape) is the best biography for years and Julian Critchley's **Westminster Man** (Elm Tree) was more than a load of laughs. Finally, Rosemary Kavan's **Freedom at a Price** (Verso), her posthumous account of life in



Prague during the nightmare of the Slansky trials, moved me more than any other book for a long time.

Phillip Whitehead

Michael Heath's **Welcome to America** (Heinemann, £5.95) has kept my blood pressure up and my adrenalin flowing all winter and I look forward to it keeping me warm through to the spring. This cartoon collection is the most potent blend of acid and bile since *The Dunciad*. After lovingly devouring page after page of these thumb-nose sketches, poison-pen portraits and satirical panoramas all dedicated to indicting America as the land of self-love, personal success, mutual admiration, terminal smugness and almost total ignorance of the rest of the world, I could feel almost sorry for his targets.

Alan Brien

I've read more new books than usual this year, but find choice surprisingly easy. It's a joy to have Norman MacCaig's **Collected Poems** (Chatto, £9.95), which confront the elements of experience with classic economy and profound wit. Paul Addison's **Now the War is Over** (Cape/BBC, £10.95), about post-war Britain, is that almost impossible thing, a *distinguished* book-of-a-TV-series, by an elegant and humane historian.

Angus Calder

The Long March: The Untold Story by Harrison Salisbury (Macmillan, £16.95). Pure envy. For years, China specialists have hoped, petitioned and begged to retrace the 1934-35 Long March. Four thousand out of 86,000 survived to go on to run China. The 75-year-old Harrison Salisbury, intrepid *New York Times* correspondent in Russia for years, got the chance in 1984 and this is the wonderful account of his own 7,000-mile exploration of Mao's route and his interviews with dozens of survivors, from State President down to humble ferryman. Salisbury's book is in the same class as Edgar Snow's *Red Star over China* and there can be no greater praise.

Jonathan Mirsky

The work that gave me most pleasure was Kimon Friar's translation of Elytis's great poem **Maria Nefeli**, first published in 1978. Douglas Dunn's **Elegies** (Faber, £7.50 & £4) also deserves high praise. And then there's Arrian's **The Campaigns of Alexander**. The original account of how to go to interesting places, meet people and kill them, Arrian's biography inadvertently provided me with great pleasure by revealing how right Diogenes was to despise the champion killer of his age.

John Lucas

The Secret Self: Short Stories by Women is a faintly yukky title, a questionable concept, but a totally successful book. Not only are the stories (by Mansfield, Lessing, Paley, Walker, Prawer Jhabvala, Carter, Frame and 25 others) of almost uniform excellence, but their eclectic provenance confirms that women cannot

help but describe a world of whose existence 'neutral' male writers are ignorant. Selected/introduced by Hermione Lee; published by Dent in its Everyman series (well, there you go) at £3.95.

Harriett Gilbert

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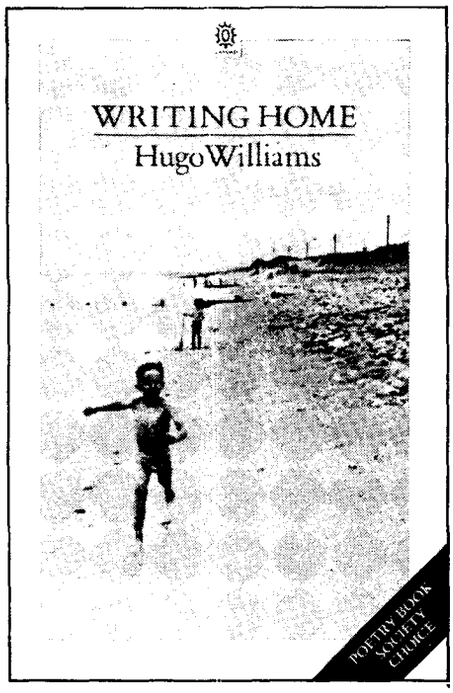
Roland Barthes' **La Chambre Claire (Camera Lucida)** demonstrated again the powers of a writer who can tell you more in half a page than most critics can in an entire book. It is, characteristically, an experiment in writing, bringing together theory, scholarship and autobiography in an unprecedented way. Hugo Williams's **Writing Home** was the most enjoyable



book of poems that I read this year. The poems are artfully constructed and show a rare courage: putting your father into a book and coming to terms with your feelings about him is a risky business. Hugo Williams has managed it well.

Jon Cook

I couldn't put it down: **A Question of Judgment** by Sara Keays (Quintessential Press, £9.95). High politics through a woman's eyes. She mentions her jobs once or twice in passing; what matter are relationships and emotions. The plot construction is like a Greek tragedy as the cultural certainties of marriage, family and social structure implode under their contradictions in a maelstrom of saturation media harassment.

John Rentoul

Can there by a totally pleasurable book without anger or grief? Would it be any good? I read Doris Lessing's **The Good Terrorist** (Cape, £9.50) with complete fascination, but scarcely pleasure, especially that blood-curdling final paragraph. Isabel Allende's **House of the Spirits** (Cape, £8.95) comes nearer, though in some chapters pleasure turns to anger and sorrow. But the end becomes, somehow, happiness.

Naomi Mitchison

By accident rather than design, I've read many novels this year: Joseph Heller's **God Knows** the funniest; Peter de Vries's **The Blood of the Lamb** the most moving; Paul Theroux's ambitious **The Mosquito Coast** the most stimulating. One novel proved unforgettable: Patrick White's **The Eye of the Storm** — relentlessly observed, linguistically brilliant and unerring in its excavation of every layer of human frailty and hypocrisy. Reading White at his best is as uncomfortable and as restorative as acupuncture.

Stephen Brook

Romantic without being soft-headed, Richard Holmes's **Footsteps** (Hodder, £12.95) mixes literary detection and autobiography, offering a unique perspective on the business of writing biography and an oblique account of the 'Sixties' generation growing up: in Paris in May 1968 he researched Mary Wollstonecraft and the French Revolution; Shelley in Italy followed; Gerard de Nerval eventually sent him home.

Paul Allen

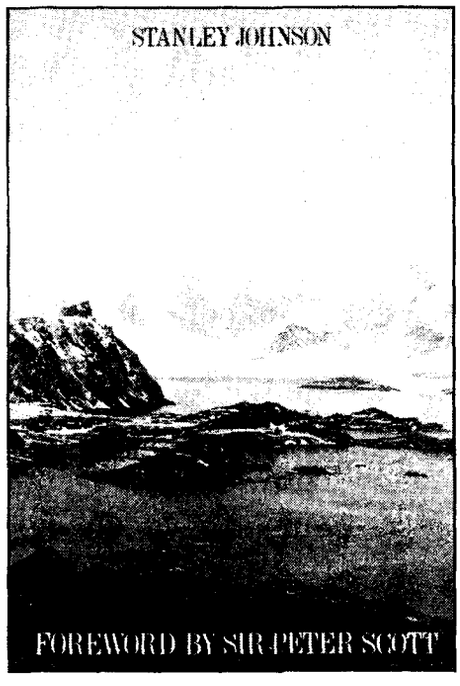
For believers in 'economic growth': William Ophuls' **Ecology and the Politics of Scarcity** (W.H. Freeman, 1977), timelier now than ever. For everyone: Italo Calvino's **Baron in Time** (Picador), which keeps all its complex charm — gay, melancholy, lyrical, austere. Calvino's arborescent Ombrosa, cut down 'since men have been swept away by this frenzy for the axe', is an imagined world as significantly memorable as Crusoe's island.

M.H. Ryle

'Pleasure' would be the wrong word, since the books I most admired this year were grim, painful and disturbing. But so is *King Lear*, so that's meant as praise. I was impressed by both **The Bone People** and by **The Good Terrorist**, and was glad to see Keri Hulme given the Booker prize which Doris Lessing doesn't need. However, the 1985 novel that made the deepest impression, and that seems most likely to remain in my mind in 1995, was Brian Moore's **Black Robe** (Cape, £8.95).

Mervyn Jones

Antarctica: The Last Great Wilderness by Stanley Johnson (Weidenfeld, £12.95), poet, novelist, ex-MEP, ex-World Bank and winner of the Greenpeace Award for outstanding service to the environment is a witty,



exciting and highly political account of his travels to Antarctica via the Falklands (where Mrs Thatcher insisted on sleeping under the bullet holes in the Governor's residence). This is wildlife's case against exploitation. The book is so good that the fact that there isn't a single glossy photograph didn't even matter.

Vicky Hutchings

It's a shaming admission, but I most enjoyed **The Diaries of Auberon Waugh**, extracted from *Private Eye* from 1976-85 (Deutsch, £4.95). A terrible old Tory and sexist, he writes elegantly enough to persuade you — wrongly, no doubt — that he may not really mean it. He's a tremendous gossip and even socialists can share some of his prejudices — e.g. against people who sue the *Eye*.

Michael Leapman

Ben Pimlott's **Hugh Dalton** (Cape, £25) completely overcame my aversion to political biographies. It is a lucid account, sympathetic but unsentimental, of one of Labour's most interesting and important politicians. If you dare to face the truth about the economic policies of the Attlee government, you will find it here.

Peter Kellner

My favourite was Barry Reay's **The Quakers and the English Revolution** (Temple Smith, £12.95), which rewrites early Quaker history. Until 1661 Quakers were not pacifists; in 1659 they offered political and military support to the republican government to prevent Charles II's restoration to the throne. The versatile Reay has also edited a valuable collection of articles on **Popular Culture in 17th-Century England** (Croom Helm, £19.95).

Christopher Hill

Later the Same Day (Virago), a remarkable collection of short stories by Grace Paley, whose acerbic and compassionate voice explores women's daily lives, unearthing the ludicrous and the painful. Yashar Kemal's **The Sea-Crossed Fisherman** (Collins Harvill, £9.95) because it describes obsessions and dreams with fierce, raw lyricism. And, yes, Keri Hulme's **The Bone People** (Hodder, £9.95) for its deeply flawed brilliance, its rough magic.

Nicci Gerrard

Plenty of good new travel books, but Patrick Leigh Fermor's **The Violins of Saint-Jacques** (republished in Oxford Paperbacks) was a special bonus for an admirer of one of the greatest of literary travellers: a delicate novel of the colonial Caribbean, coloured by marvellous, high-precision descriptive passages.

Andrew Clements

I would hazard a guess that no one reading this has heard of E. Okolo's sex-and-violence novel **No Easier Road**, published in Nigeria by Fourth Dimension. Crudely written and lacking any pretensions, it nevertheless manages to capture the underside of Nigerian life with a force and a fidelity missing from the work of his more celebrated compatriots who have had the benefit of an English literature degree.

Adewale Maja-Pearce

Nancy Mitford: A Biography by Selina Hastings (Hamish Hamilton, £12.50) movingly recounts the story of Nancy's absurd brief love affair with General de Gaulle's ADC Gaston Palewski, followed by her obsessive, unrequited passion for him which lasted 32 years. She moved to France solely to be near this inveterate womaniser, who couldn't wait till she was dead before marrying a duchess.

James Bentley

Risking Pseud's Corner, I'll name an obscure booklet that really caught my imagination: Clarence Daniels's **The Story of Eyam Plague** (published by the author at 'Le Roc', Eyam, £2.50), about the Derbyshire village which, when visited by the plague in 1665, self-

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sacrificingly isolated itself for over a year to prevent the epidemic spreading through the locality. Of 350 villagers, 260 died from the disease within that time.

David Montrose

John Calvin Batchelor's extraordinary novel **The Birth of the People's Republic of Antarctica** (Granada, £3.50) is an epic vision of a world wracked by unemployment, plague, failed utilitarianism and every variety of social and racial intolerance where millions are forced to become boat-people, drifting inexorably south to congregate in vast, murderous, Lebanon-style refugee camps on the ice. A most powerful oddity.

Peter Wilsher

That marvellous novelist Marge Piercy's latest exploration of a woman's entry into political and feminist consciousness and action, **Fly Away Home** — simultaneously a political mystery thriller and tender account of falling out of — and into — a sort of love. And, on not so completely different a plane, the collected essays of two of America's most articulate and radical biologists, exploring ecology, evolution and the relationships of the individual to the environment, Richard Levins and Richard Lewontin's **The Dialectical Biologist** (Harvard).

Steven Rose

I picked up **Train to Hell** by Alexei Sayle (Methuen, £2.50) ironically enough at Heathrow Airport. It came out last year. It is a chilling Marxist prediction of the material inevitability of the Brussels massacre. We follow Liverpool supporters as they cross Europe in a sealed train guarded by an international force, to contain the outbreak of tastelessness, bad cuisine and anarchy. I was glad when my plane landed.

Anthony Barnett

My book of 1985 is Malcolm Lowry's **Selected Letters** (Penguin), back in print after nearly 20 years: a brave and charming commentary on a hauntingly difficult life. Christopher Reid and Hugo Williams have written affectingly and entertainingly on mirrors and other matters.

Michael Hofmann

Closest to home, and my heart, among a cascade of film books was Paul Coates's **The Story of the Lost Reflection** (Verso £18.50 & £6.95), uninvitingly subtitled 'The Alienation of the Image in Western and Polish Cinema' but containing a sheaf of sparkling essays on such varied directors as Altman, Bunuel, Coppola, Herzog and Wajda, all stemming from a splendid nuts-and-bolts account of what thinking on your bum as you watch a movie is like.

John Coleman

Poems: Matt Simpson **Making Arrangements** — strong experiences; Seething Wells in **The Rising Sons of Ranting Verse** ... well, seething; Carl Sandburg **Collected Poems** — lyrical, musical, political, populist, 1910-1960. Historical: **Non-Jewish Zionism** Regina Sharif — Christian fundamentalist contributions (1500-1948) to the outrage of Zionism. Kids: a great read-aloud **The Conker as Hard as a Diamond** Chris Powling.

Michael Rosen

It's been a strange reading year for me. **The Arabian Nights** is a book of wonders. **The Iliad** is unforgettable. Henri Troyat's **Ivan the Terrible** conveys incredible things about power. **The Little Prince** is magical and wise and, among short story writers, Machado de Assis and Narayan have both given a lot of pleasure. Isabel Allende's **The House of the Spirits** I found both flawed and brave.

Ben Okri

For sheer exuberance allied with seemingly effortless art, Jeanette Winterson's strongly autobiographical novel, **Oranges are Not the Only Fruit** (Pandora, £4.50). I tipped it, vainly, for the Booker shortlist, but it won the Whitbread First Novel Award instead. For a book overwhelming in its emotional and moral *intelligence*, *Brian Masters's study of Dennis Nilsen*, the mass murderer, **Killing for Company** (Cape, £9.95). Doris Lessing's **The Good Terrorist** (Cape, £9.50) is, first and foremost, an exhilaratingly deft *Comedy* of Morals. Gay and feminist eyebrows have been raised: unrepentantly I relished it. First published

in 1947 and just republished, **One Fine Day** by Mollie Panter-Downes is a flawlessly crafted elegy to an England forever killed by war and an optimistic welcome to the new one emerging (Virago, £2.95).

Alison Hennegan

Easily the most stimulating book I've read in the last 12 *months* is **Freud: The Assault on Truth** by J. M. Masson (Faber, £9.95). It presents compelling evidence that Freud was right about his women patients first time round — that their traumas stemmed from assault in childhood rather than fantasies produced by the Oedipus Complex. Scholarly *and* readable.

Joan Smith

Vasily Grossman's **Life and Fate** (Collins Harvill, £15) is deliberately traditional in scale and style — an interlocking cast of nearly 200 characters set in a panoramic narrative of nearly 900 pages, an epic account of the winter of 1942-1943, of life and death at the front and in the prisons or camps of both sides, of the military confrontation and political convergence of Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany, and a passionate reminder of the opposition between liberty and tyranny in both (indeed all) regimes. As a human document in an anti-human age it is worthy to stand alongside the masterpieces of Pasternak and Solzhenitsyn; if it has less literary merit, it has special value because it doesn't take refuge in any of the usual religious and political answers but relies only on individual human beings and their personal relationships.

Nicolas Walter

First a disturbing and powerful Dutch novel, **The Assault** by Harry Mulisch (Collins Harvill, £8.95). Two reprints, both by Hogarth, have greatly impressed me: **Frank Burnett** by Dorothy Vernon White, original in construction, passionately Christian in feeling, and H. G. Wells's **Christina Alberta's Father.** A new talent: Graeme Woolastone in **Stranger than Love** (GMP), a novel which delineates, in a subtle and exact way, the relationship between a young gay man and his homophobic neighbour. Finally, Stephen Spender's **Collected Poems** (Faber) and who — for all its eccentricities — will now be able to do without Martin Seymour Smith's **Guide to Modern World Literature** (Macmillan)?

Paul Binding

I have spent much of the last year in strangers' company. Michael Ignatieff's **The Needs of Strangers** (Chatto) is always stimulating and often inspiring, while Donald Spoto's **The Kindness of Strangers** (Bodley Head) unlocked many of the mysteries of Tennessee Williams the Man, if not the Artist. Of the various miners' strike books Geoffrey Goodman's is the best and the *Sunday Times*'s the worst.

David Edgar

Two compendia of information — Marina Warner's **Monuments and Maidens** (Weidenfeld), which I reviewed here and like even more now, and Kenneth Leech's **True God** (Sheldon Press), a sort of spiritual history of Christian images of God. Both told me things I did not know and organised things I did know in revealing ways. And Grace Paley's new short stories **Later the Same Day** because they are brilliant.

Sara Maitland

No book has given me greater pleasure this year than Elizabeth Lambert Ortiz's **Caribbean Cookery** (Penguin, £2.50): I've put on about a stone in weight to prove it. Special mention, too, for **Driff's Guide to All the Secondhand & Antiquarian Bookshops in Britain** (£4.50 from BCM Driffield, London WC1 3XX). The author's politics are combatively right-wing but his entries for individual bookshops are useful, well judged and often extremely funny.

Francis Wheen

Donald Horne's **The Great Museum** (Pluto, £5.50) takes a sharp look at how countries — from the UK to the USSR — define their own history, with monuments and museums being the orthodox version. A splendid analysis of the PR of power. Stimulating, erudite and iconoclastic. A guided tour to the guided tour of history.

Naseem Khan

Geoffrey Grigson's death made my mind up for me. Throughout my adult life he acted as a kind of absentee uncle: enthusiastic, sensible, often crotchety. I bought all his books as they appeared: poems, essays, anthologies, jottings about people and places and plants. **Recollections** is typical, looking back either affectionately or tetchily at writers of the 1930s and 1940s. Maybe I can also recommend **The Crest on the Silver**, recently republished, surely one of the finest autobiographies of our time.

Charles Fox

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In Beauchamp Place

Lachlan Mackinnon

A girl in a fawn mac ducks into a taxi.
The day creaks and whines like a steel halyard.
It bangs the mast. It wants to set sail

but the shiny cars jostle like floes
in the choked tumultuous neck of a river.
Their voices rise. They are geese in a head-wind.

You remember raking the river-bed, the light
that broke round your boots, the tin cans
you struck for in the clouds of dislodged mud

every stuck hank of weed let go.
The wind off the hills forked like water
round the splash and splash of your clawed rake

and you stood in the silence of your work
watching the dripped light swooshed away
like a memory in a rainy crowded street.

Chinese women begin to speak out

Alison Hardie

LOOKING THROUGH an anthology of Chinese short stories which won national prizes in 1983, I was sorry, if not altogether surprised, to find that only two stories (out of 29) were by women writers. This reflects the generally subordinate position of women in Chinese society. The process of emancipation which began with the 1911 Revolution and was enshrined in law after the Communist victory of 1949 has not yet succeeded in wiping out the effects of two millennia of Confucian male supremacy.

Nevertheless, though male authors are numerically stronger, much of the most interesting of recent Chinese fiction is being produced by women writers. An outstanding example of this innovative and exciting new literature is Dai Houying's *People (Ren ah! Ren)*. Written in 1980, this shortish novel caused a storm of controversy when it was published and was subsequently banned. The official objection was that it was 'humanitarian', this being anathema to the Chinese Communist Party.

Apart from going out on a limb ideologically, the novel also breaks with China's conservative literary conventions by telling its story through the mouths of a number of different characters in successive chapters. The depiction of different personalities through their own words is convincingly done, with the emphasis always on the inner life of the characters: very little actually happens during the timespan of the plot. The novel concerns the relationships between a group of people at a provincial university — ranging from the elderly, ultra-conservative Party Secretary to the teenage daughter of a divorced woman lecturer in the Chinese literature department — and how they come to terms with their experiences from the start of the Anti-Rightist movement of 1957 through the Cultural Revolution to the present day. At the centre of the novel is the triangular relationship between Sun Yue, the divorced university lecturer, her weak, unprincipled ex-husband Zhao Zhenhuan and the free-thinking philosopher He Jingfu, who has loved her since their student days.

The novel makes clear the difficult position of Sun Yue as a divorced woman in Chinese society and her vulnerability to gossip and attacks through her relationships with men. This theme of the vulnerability of independent women is one that has been frequently tackled by the distinguished woman writer Zhang Jie. It is an important element in her best-known short story '*Love Must Not Be Forgotten*'*, while her most overtly feminist work, a short story called '*The Ark*', is about three young-middle-aged women friends, two divorced and one widowed. One of them — based on the film director Ling Zi, the daughter of Marshall Ye Jianying — is constantly struggling to get her male film crew to pay any attention to her, as they mutter behind her back about what an old bag she is, while at the same time she has to deal with harassment from her ne'er-do-well ex-husband.

The self-doubt and social insecurity of another of Zhang Jie's single heroines, a woman reporter covering a story on economic reforms in the long novel *Leaden Wings (Chenzhongde Chibang)*, is contrasted with the superior social position and arrogance of the ill-educated wife of the reforming pioneer who is the hero of the story.

The reactionary, ill-educated woman mismatched with a more enlightened man seems to be almost a stereotype in contemporary Chinese fiction — she appears in Dai Houying's *People* as both the Party Secretary's wife and the second wife of Zhao Zhenhuan, and also in a long short story which has had considerable success both in its original form and as a film, Shen Rong's '*In Middle Age (Ren Dao Zhongnian)*'*. Here the heroine, an overworked, underpaid and undernourished woman eye-surgeon, is contrasted with the selfish, bossy, prosperous wife of a Vice-Minister on whom the surgeon is to operate.

This does reflect an aspect of social reality in China: during the upheavals of the Thirties and Forties, many well-educated or intelligent and successful Party cadres were separated from or never had the chance to meet compatible partners and (social pressure to marry being what it is) made do with uneducated but probably ambitious country women. In the more settled conditions after 1949, as the men ascended the Party hierarchy, their wives rose with them to a social and political influence for which their background had not prepared them, and the effects of this are being felt in China still.

Male writers seem to prefer to ignore this particular social problem. And some apparently successful male writers seem to fail totally to create any plausible female characters. This is the case with Zhang Yang, whose novel *The Second Handclasp* was greeted with some enthusiasm on its publication in 1979 and was actually made into a film. The improbable tale of a Chinese woman nuclear scientist who returns to the motherland and to a brief reunion with her former fiancé after decades in the USA fails to acknowledge that a woman's experience of life might be qualitatively different from a man's at all. On the other hand, there are male writers who show real empathy with their female characters; for instance, Zhang Xian in his short story '*A Corner Forsaken by Love*'* which movingly depicts a young peasant girl emotionally crippled by the suicide of her elder sister after the sister was discovered in *flagrante delicto* with her boyfriend (premarital sex being taboo in China).

This story is also unusual in presenting peasant characters not as sturdy proletarian heroes but as real people with individual inner lives. The young woman writer Qiao Xuezhu's short story '*The Night the Frost Came (Jin Ye Shuang Jiang)*' is also exceptionally successful in portraying the emotional life of a forestry worker's family.

The subordination of women in Chinese society and in particular the marginal position of independent women intellectuals seem to have given these women writers a valuably sharp and critical insight into some of the contradictions of human society and the complications of human psychology. As a result they are starting to produce work which is both technically innovative and psychologically truthful. So far there may be few great works of art but at this rate, if the ideological controls on writers continue to relax, we are due to see some very interesting work indeed. □

**These stories are available in English versions from Panda Books of Peking.*

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The camera can lie, sometimes

Peter Dormer

Robert Capa: Biography
RICHARD WHELAN *Faber* £15
Robert Capa: Photographs
ed. CORNELL CAPA & RICHARD WHELAN
Faber £15
Camera Culture
HALLA BELOFF *Blackwell* £14.95
It Happened In Our Lifetime: A Memoir In Words and Pictures
JOHN PHILLIPS *Michael Joseph* £19.95

WE KNOW CAMERAS can tell lies but we still get upset if the photographer dupes us. Artistic licence is all right for war artists but not for war photographers hence the controversy over whether or not Robert Capa, war photographer, staged his famous picture of the Falling Soldier in his coverage of the civil war in Spain. Richard Whelan says in his biography of Capa that the controversy will not be resolved but describes the photograph as 'a great and powerful image, a haunting symbol of all the Loyalist soldiers who died in the war . . .'

Capa was born in Hungary and his name was Endre Friedmann; this became Andre Friedmann when he went to France. The adoption of the name 'Robert Capa' arose from a need to make more money. Friedmann, who was living in Paris at the time, guessed that editors would take more of his work and pay more for it if they thought he was a famous American photographer, and so he re-invented himself as Capa. Whelan says that Andre Friedmann tried hard to become Robert Capa — the successful, glamorous American: 'The longer he played the part of Capa, the more completely he grew into the role. But Capa always remained the construction of his fantasy, even after the fantasy had become reality . . .'

Whelan's biography is cautious. As an official biographer he may have pulled his punches, not that one would expect to have Capa debunked: he was a brave man, a good craftsman and, apparently, the life and soul of many friendships. This biography can thus be read as the portrait of one hell of a guy. But throughout the book Whelan carefully notes inconsistencies in stories which Capa told of himself and so doubts are introduced about Capa's reliability as a reporter. Capa's inventions begin as far back as his experiences as a youth in Budapest when he was arrested by the police. In recalling the incident Capa spun a fanciful yarn about his rescue as well as exaggerating other details about his temporary imprisonment. Whelan explains Capa's inventions by noting his need to entertain people — the embellishment of escapades was just a part of the entertainment. But more seriously Whelan thinks that Capa lived his life as a fantasy.

Andre Robert Friedmann Capa's achievements in his craft are undeniable and Whelan and Cornell Capa have made a comprehensive survey of the photographs to coincide with the biography. But Whelan's biography is troubling because one wants to believe in the photographs — believe simply 'so that's the way it looked.' Such belief is undermined if you hear that the reporter who took them told lies. Not that many (or even any) of the pictures are necessarily fakes or could actually be faked but the uncertainty which Whelan sows so quietly is ultimately subversive.

Halla Beloff's *Camera Culture* deals with documentary photography among other things. Beloff's book covers most of the issues in photography with great clarity — and I would recommend it as an excellent primer before reading the polemical writings of, say, Susan Sontag or struggling in the swamps of Roland Barthes.

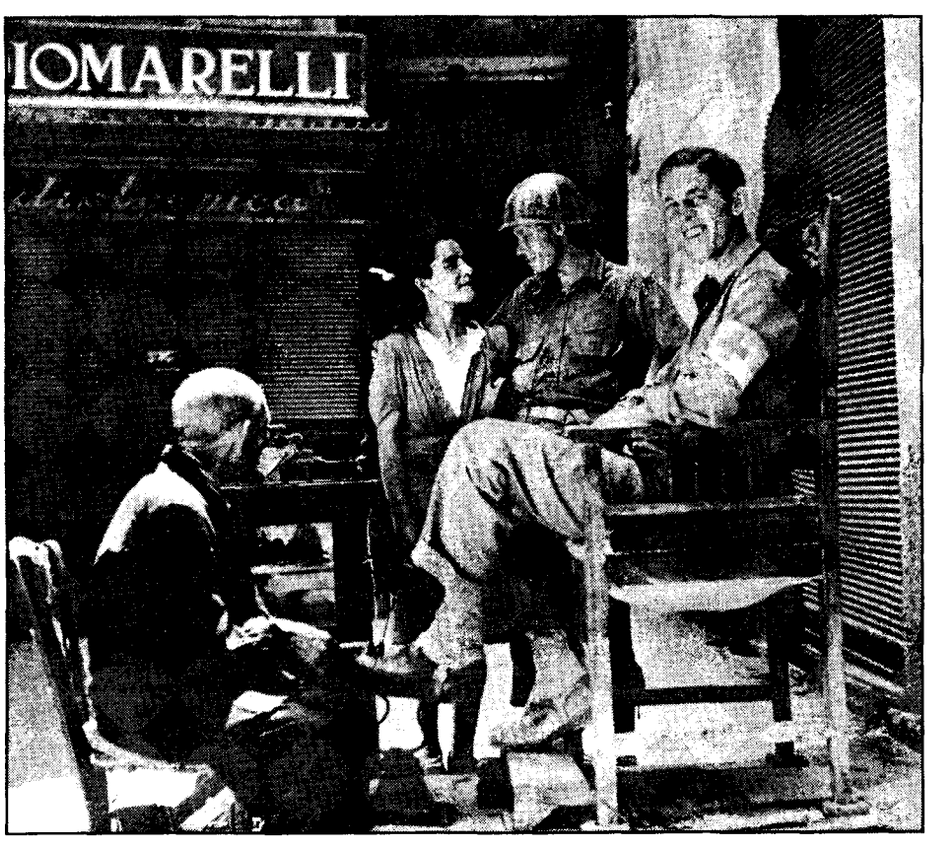
Beloff's book has been written like a very clear version of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* without the telephone numbers: she proceeds by statements rather than discursive debate. Beloff uncovers the obvious in one-liners — 'Why are all photographs beautiful?' she asks. She gets to her points quickly, telling us, for example, that documentary photography shows us the bad things in life and that intrinsic in the documentary photographer's role is the element of reform. And, of course, documentation *is* more than reporting. It is propaganda. For each of those reasons photography has become the key craft in the community arts movement, indeed in community arts it is displacing all except theatre as the art of opposition.

Documentary photographers who show the bad things in life are not protected by their cameras from what they see — for what they see exists and they are a part of it for a while. You need physical and mental courage to be a documentary photographer. Beloff makes that point: war photographers get shot at and social photographers get beaten up if they oppose authorities who would rather things remained hidden. The photographer, powerless to do anything other than start reform by showing things to other people and hoping that they will do something about it, can also become restless and haunted — both needing and fearing the work. Such seemed to be the case with Robert Capa as he approached middle age.

Beloff also argues that the classification of photography as art or craft is less a problem of status, more a problem as to whether or not we regard the medium as truthful. This is the nub of the problem with Capa's Falling Soldier — as a piece of 'art' it has its own special kind of 'truth' and is wondrously powerful but to have staged the photograph as art and for us to know that it is art is one thing, to believe it to be life is quite another. Photography as craft is expected to confirm to us that, 'Yes, this is as it was.' The problem with photographers is that we have no way of knowing beforehand what role they are playing. With painters and sculptors we can see from the very nature of their work that they are manipulating the world.

It does not help to be told that all photographs are subjective. There are degrees of subjectivity and these degrees are important — psychologically.

It Happened In Our Lifetime is a collection of photographs from *Life* photographer John Phillips. A book like this is a public family album, it should be issued free with the pension allowances to those to whose lifetime (the war, the immediate post-war period) it applies. □



Does the photograph tell us about the world as it was or only about Robert Capa's perceptions?

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You must be joking

Roger Woddis

No Laughing Matter
ITZHAK GALNOOR & STEVEN LUKES
Routledge £7.95

A DRUNK, found rolling around on the ground in front of a statue to Stalin, wails, 'I'll never drink again. I'll never touch another drop.'

'Why do you say that?' asks a policeman.

'I can see two of them.'

For Stalin, read Hitler, Reagan, Thatcher, Ian Paisley or the abomination of your choice. Political jokes, like folk songs, travel the world and cross all boundaries: only the names are changed to identify the guilty and bring them nearer home.

Here we have 600 of them, chosen by Itzhak Galnoor and fellow-academic Steven Lukes from their collection of over 3,000. They are illustrated with cartoons by Michael Heath and introduced by George Mikes. The majority of them — and the best — are the bitter fruits of oppression and represent, both symbolically and literally, a form of underground resistance. 'In a tyranny,' says Mikes, 'political jokes are acts of defiance and of great courage.' And, it might be added, at their deepest and most significant level they are expressions of loathing and contempt for their oppressors. But that doesn't prevent them from being funny.

The political joke (really a short story with a sardonic twist) seems to have no strong tradition in Britain. Our taste is more for the sexual practices, and malpractices, of those in high places. A certain gardener, for example, in my youth, who had it away with a famous actress married to a peer, was said to have been convicted for 'forcing his rhubarb in June'. Our strength lies in the political cartoon: the line in visual satire runs from Gillray, Rowlandson and Hogarth, through Dyson, Low and Vicky, to *Spitting Image* and the inspired savagery of Steve Bell.

What makes a good political joke? The authors express a preference for the pithy story with a knock-out punch, though some of the most effective have a lengthy build-up leading to the final pay-off. For example: a guard outside a timber works in Leningrad stops a worker leaving with a bulging sack perched on his wheelbarrow.

'What's in that sack?'

'Sawdust and shavings. The foreman said I could take them home.'

'I wasn't born yesterday. Empty it out.'

Sure enough, it's full of sawdust and shavings. The next day the same thing happens, and for days afterwards. At last the guard loses patience.

'Look, I *know* you're stealing something. I promise not to nick you — just tell me what it is.'

'Wheelbarrows, comrade, wheelbarrows.'

There are jokes here about bureaucracy, elections, religion, work, national differences, war and peace. The authors (Galnoor is Professor of Political Science at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, and Lukes is Fellow and Tutor in Politics and Sociology at Balliol College, Oxford) take no obvious sides, though there is a preponderance of jokes against Communist regimes and many involving the plight of Jews. We have only a handful of jokes about South Africa, but one of them is worth a hundred solemn leading articles and says it all:

An Afrikaner visiting London expresses amazement at the number of men he sees working in the street. 'Just give me six boys and I could do it myself.'

Inevitably, they don't all ring bells; belabouring the mighty calls for a special kind of deadpan disgust often lacking in the anonymous inventors. But the best are memorable and evocative of loud laughter — including those which appeal to national prejudice. You can forgive yourself for smiling at a Mark Twain crack which yields the book's title — 'A German joke is no laughing matter.' (A wise tip from the publisher's blurb: to avoid possible nausea, the book should not be read at a sitting, but dipped into from time to time, like a box of chocolates.)

The political joke that jabs most jarringly at the funny-bone is one that combines savage humour with essential truth. Nothing breaks down more doors or frees more captives than the laughter of recognition. Wet yourself and grow wise at this one: ▷

Public enemy no. 1

Kevin Fegan

'Okay God, we know you're in there:
you're surrounded so throw out your weapons
and come out with your hands together in prayer.
We're a reasonable people:
It took you seven days to get yourself into this mess
so you've got seven days to come out.'

Day 1 —
we talk to you
in our best police voice:
no response.

Day 2 —
we talk some more
only this time kind of threatening:
no response.

Day 3 —
we shoot out a few of your windows
try to loosen your tongue a little:
still no response.

Day 4 —
we do nothing
play cards, worship a few idols maybe:
you send out a few prophets to negotiate.

Day 5 —
we get nowhere with the prophets
we need to speak to the boss:
you send out a book.

Day 6 —
only just learning to read
can't make sense of the book:
you send out your son.

Day 7 —
we shoot your son in self-defence
he appeared to be reaching in his pocket for a gun:
we await your response.

Day 8 —
we're expecting a shoot-out any minute now
either that or you've slipped out the back way
past the police and priests.

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Harold Wilson is told that two visitors are waiting to see him — the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Director-General of the CBI.

'Send the Archbishop in first,' he says. 'I only have to kiss his hand.' □

Bombardier and volcano

Michael Hofmann

Pound/Lewis:
The Letters of Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis
ed. TIMOTHY MATERER *Faber* £25

IT WAS ONLY Wyndham Lewis who actually fought — as an artilleryman in 1917 — but the whole of this collected correspondence between him and Pound has the air of despatches from the front. The missives pass from one great redoubt to the other — screamingly urgent, abbreviated, venomous, conspiratorial — pursuing the common cause against the barbarity, stupidity and lack of discrimination of their colleagues and their public (such as it was), and seeking to advance the other's work. It seems at first tactless and usurpatory of Pound to refer to himself, safe in London, as a 'highly mechanized typing volcano' to Lewis the bombardier, but it's a fair description.

The letters date from 1914 to 1957, when Lewis died and Pound was in his 12th year at St Elizabeth's Hospital, Washington. The editor has divided them into four sections: 'Blasting', to do with Lewis's magazine *BLAST* and the 'British Museum era' around 1914; 'Bombardiering' when Lewis was in France; 'Campaigning' (no avoiding the military metaphor) on the Twenties and Thirties, as social criticism and economic theory came to occupy the letter-writers; and lastly 'Remembering', with Pound in his 'BugHouz' and Lewis going blind in London. The more active correspondent is Pound — an impression perhaps strengthened by the difficulty of reading his letters (though one gets better at it with practice), with their abbreviations and allusions, dramatic punctuation and lineation, and above all their wicked bastardisations and misspellings: the 'NY Slimes' and other 'wypers', 'snoozeprint', the 'Batcan'. An apt and innocent one is 'I purr-zoom'.

Apart from their sheer documentary importance, these letters offer pleasures of style, plot, reference, personality and feeling. The sustained creativity of the two correspondents, their mutual loyalty and respect over nearly 50 years, through two world wars and notorious personal political vagaries are inestimable. What they have in common is their apartness, their disdain and vituperativeness, although the way this shows itself with each of them is totally different. Still, to each other, they are 'Dear Ez-roar' and 'deah wynDAM'. And while their circumstances were also different (for a start, they were not often together in the same place, hence these letters), they found ways of overcoming this: the bombardier and the 'typing volcano', Lewis's social and Pound's economic criticism in the Thirties and, after the War, Lewis's remark that 'England, like yours, is a lock-up, its size unimportant really.' But the differences are also revealing. Lewis regularly shows exasperation with Pound's promotional schemes, his suggestions of patrons and purchasers for Lewis's paintings. His war-letters are full of a fine hauteur, and later a contempt for danger: 'I find *squad-drill* a gentle and underrated amusement' and 'No hour has passed so far that I have not heard the song of the little hot hunks that pass over or by you, or come down "plock" at your feet.' Still, he found time to reply to Pound's literary animadversions, to inquire about new magazines.

Even the pauses in this correspondence have their use and their value. After himself being 'frozen out' by Lewis for a few years in the Twenties, Pound starts writing to him again, but the magazines mentioned have different titles: they are called things like *Fascist Quarterly* and *British Union Quarterly*. If these letters are the most alarming and vigorously unpleasant in the correspondence, the resumption of the correspondence in 1946 after a six-year gap is the most touching part of it, when Lewis, having heard via Eliot of Pound's hospitalisation and his need for contact, began writing to him again, in letters at once distant and full of friendship. (April 9th. 1947):

> Dear Ezra. I often think about you: and I have been writing about you too. At least a year must elapse however before the book in which that bit occurs sees the light. Shortage of paper etc. etc. makes it very long. I never know what to say to you when I sit down to write. Do you find time to write anything (verse or prose) or rather — for you have time enough no doubt - are you able to?

Being what it is, the nearest thing to a facsimile edition, *Pound/Lewis* is an enormously readable and rewarding book. A lot of the credit for this must go to the editor, Timothy Materer, whose notes, introductory and bridge passages are quite exemplary: he makes something potentially recondite and obscure as gripping as a novel. And *Pound/Lewis* shows the effects of time on human lives as well as any novel could. In 1954, Pound writes: 'Talleyrand was a bit older when he said: all contemporaries are now friends.' □

Driving with Alison

Jonathan Steffen

I drive. You count the miles and navigate.
Choosing a crooked route, we alternate
Between the mountain passes and the plains,
Between the motorway and country lanes,
Discussing death. For every road we take —
Polluted freeway, dirt track round the lake —
Is marked according to its category,
And has its very own variety
Of deaths to offer. The pile-up, head-on crash
Is indicated by a jagged gash
Of colour on the map. Your choice this time:
You choose the red. The next choice will be
mine.
And all the while, the hope that when it comes
We'll die together in an instant: one.
Time for a driving-change. It's getting late.
You drive. I count the miles and navigate.

Quiz answers

Cashing in
a) Jennifer Rush; b) Frankie Goes to Hollywood; c) Cliff Richard; d) Elton John (and Bernie Taupin); e) Wham!; f) Demis Roussos; g) Pete Townshend; h) Jerry Hall; i) Bruce Springsteen

Walkie-talkies
1: a) to e) all Margaret Thatcher; 2: a) Ron Reagan Jnr on President Reagan; b) Bob Geldof on Prince Charles; c) Rupert Murdoch on Shakespeare; d) David Steel on Thatcher; e) Princess Diana on Princess Anne; 3: a) Tina Brown (in *Vanity Fair)* on Prince Charles; b) Ian Paisley on Jeffrey Archer; c) Paul McCartney on John Lennon; d) Pierre Cardin on Raisa Gorbachev

Heavy Petting
a) Sir Geoffrey Howe; b) Michael Foot; c) Sir Winston Churchill; d) Franklin D. Roosevelt; e) Lyndon B. Johnson; f) Richard Nixon; g) Charley (as in *Travels with Charley)*; h) Flush; i) Blondi; j) Hodge; k) Macavity; l) Bull's-Eye

Body Count
a) 5 (Enid Blyton stories); b) 40 (school song); c) 7 (Greek legend); d) 3 (in the 12 days of Christmas); e) 76 (song); f) 10 (Russian Revolution); g) 6 (in *Alice)*; h) 39 (in C of E); i) 20,000 (film title); j) 20,000 (Jules Verne book); k) 3 (children's TV programme); l) 3 (American comedians); m) 7 (area of London); n) 12 (Tremeloes song); o) 2 (Athens and Sparta); p) 9 (game); q) 8 (Byrds song)

Passing on
a) Frank Hampson; b) Chester Gould; c) Reginald Dixon; d) Roy Plomley; e) Leslie Mitchell; f) Phil Silvers; g) Karen Quinlan; h) Keith Castle; i) Laura Ashley; j) Robert Graves; k) Rex Alston; l) Percy Fender; m) John Boulting; n) Yul Brynner; o) Orson Welles; p) Simone Signoret; q) Rock Hudson; r) Lord George-Brown; s) Charles Douglas-Home

Title Deeds
a) George Robey; b) Dire Straits; c) Hannen Swaffer; d) Perdita (in *The Winter's Tale)*; e) Sir Walter Raleigh; f) Charles Lindbergh; g) Colley Cibber; h) Phineas T. Barnum; i) Benjamin Franklin; j) Dolores (in Swinburne's poem); k) Cupid (according to Biron in *Love's Labours Lost)*

Annual report
a) Doris Lessing; b) Iris Murdoch; c) Claude Simon; d) Francoise Sagan; e) Patrick Jenkin; f) Lord Gowrie; g) Sun Myung Moon; h) Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh; i) Sara Keays; j) Clive Ponting; k) Lord Thorneycroft; l) Brian Sedgemore; m) Booker Prize judges; n) members of Peacock Committee on BBC; o) members of C of E inquiry into inner cities; p) signatories of advert for new Nuclear Freeze campaign; q) Ruth Lawrence; r) Denis Thatcher

Ways of escape
1: a) first person to be killed by a train (1830); b) trampled by king's horse at Epsom Derby (1913); c) fell off horse (1087); d) shot by arrow in New Forest (1100); e) strangled when her scarf caught in rear wheel of car (1927); f) shot in lobby of House of Commons (1812); g) caught typhoid from drinking water in Paris (1931); h) assassinated in Mexico (1919); i) choked on ham sandwich (1974); j) killed in car accident (1960); k) killed in car accident (1955); l) malaria (1658); 2: a) Roger McGough; b) Don Maclean; c) Stevie Smith; d) e.e. cummings

Pinko
a) our martyred dead; b) John Berger; c) Maria Marten; d) Dorothy L. Sayers; e) both written by Cole Porter; f) Jerome Kern wrote score for both; g) Surrey; h) Cornwall; i) Chauntecleer (in *The Nun's Priest's Tale)*; j) Moira Shearer; k) Clark Gable and Jean Harlow; l) a tree; m) a bird; n) football

Playing up
a) synchronised swimming; b) badminton; c) snooker; d) rugby union; e) contract bridge; f) golf; g) curling; h) hurling; i) lawn tennis; j) judo

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Putting on the stylus

Charles Fox, Jon Savage and Andrew Clements explore the Christmas record scene

JAZZ

Loose Tubes:
Loose Tubes LTLP 001
Loose Tubes is one of the most original big bands to have come together in Britain. Which is not surprising, for it is packed with the best of the young newcomers: saxophonists such as Ian Ballamy, Tim Whitehead and Mark Lockheart; trombonist John Harborne; trumpeter Dave DeFries; guitarist John Parricelli. It's a bigger band than most — 21 pieces — and the scores are largely the work of either bassist Steve Berry, or Django Bates, a keyboard player but capable of switching to bugle or melodica or tenor horn (it's worth noting that the sleeve lists the synthesiser — DX7 or Prophet — that Bates uses in particular solos: a rebuke to those who imagine all electronic gadgets sound the same). The scores are intricate — texturally, rhythmically and in the way the themes interweave. Django Bates's 'Rowing Boat Delineation Egg', admittedly meant to be jokey, rambles through the twelve-bar blues and a cunning pastiche of Scott Joplin, but also has collective blowing highly reminiscent of what Chris McGregor's Brotherhood of Breath got up to in its heyday.

New York Scene
ART BLAKEY'S JAZZ MESSENGERS *Concord* CJ 256
During the past couple of years Art Blakey's jazz has surfaced in unlikely places, taken up by a generation of young dancers in need of something more invigorating than disco music. Blakey remains one of the master drummers of jazz. He put together his first Jazz Messengers in 1955 and for 30 years has kept the group on the road, meanwhile establishing a reputation as an unerring snapper-up of brilliant young talent. The personnel has changed frequently, yet Blake has always had Duke Ellington's instinct for finding musicians who would preserve a sense of continuity. What happened when Wynton Marsalis and his brother Branford left the Messengers to follow their own careers? In came the trumpeter Terence Blanchard and the saxophonist Donald Harrison, neither of them well known beforehand yet able to fit instantly into what Blakey had in mind. Both take lively solos on this LP, both contribute compositions that suite the Messengers' policy yet possess an individual flair. Nobody would claim these as the finest performances Blakey has put on record, but they are totally characteristic. The music demonstrates how a jazz group can break fresh ground and yet somehow remain the same.

Bird at the Roost, Vol. 1
CHARLIE PARKER *Savoy* WL 70541 (2) (2 LPs)
After returning from America in the summer I wrote a piece for the *NS* in which I described what had felt like a time-warp, lying in bed in Manhattan in 1985 listening to broadcasts that Charlie Parker made 37 years earlier. Some of those broadcasts turn up on this album. All took place at the Royal Roost, a club located where Broadway crosses Times Square. Symphony Sid Torin (Lester Young immortalised him in a blues tune, 'Jumpin' With Symphony Sid') comperes with frantic enthusiasm, never at a loss for a hip phrase. But the music transcends any sense of period. Despite the strains of a turbulent life-style, Parker seemed incapable of falling back on clichés, remaining an extraordinarily inspired improviser. His companions were sometimes more fallible. Miles Davis had not become the charismatic figure of later years, Kinny Dorham was a down-the-line bebop trumpeter; Al Haig's piano solos suffer from often being submerged beneath Max Roach's cymbals. But the intensity and euphoria of these performances outweigh individual or technical flaws. And among the broadcasts is one made after midnight on Christmas Eve, 1948, when Parker launched into a blues-bespattered 'White Christmas'.

Luis Russell and his Orchestra 1926-1930
VJM VLP 54
Most of the musicians on this LP come from New Orleans or nearby. Luis Russell himself, however, was born in Panama, but came to the United States and, by the mid-1920s, was in Chicago playing piano in a biggish band led by King Oliver, doyen of New Orleans trumpeters. Russell more or less took that band over when it fell apart in New York. It became one of the most splendidly aggressive and joyous ensembles ever heard in jazz, a big band that possessed the looseness and vigour of Jelly Roll Morton's Red Hot Peppers. Riffs abound and Albert Nicholas's clarinet knits together brass and reeds, while in the background Pops Foster slaps his bass, a catalyst within the rhythm section. No trombonist ever sounded more scathing or uninhibited than J. C. Higginbotham from Atlanta, Georgia — exultant in pieces such as 'Feelin' The Spirit' and 'Jersey Lightning' (the nickname for a potent bootleg whisky), pertinently sorrowful in 'The New Call Of The Freaks', a blues with enigmatic lyrics. The star of the band, though, was Henry 'Red' Allen, a trumpeter well ahead of his time, ignoring the symmetrical phrasing that gave Louis Armstrong's playing a Miltonic grandeur, cultivating instead a filibustering, devil-may-care stance.

Catwalk
EMILY REMLER *Concord* CJ 265
There was a time when jazz guitarists used too many notes, whizzing through solos full of technical expertise but lacking quiddity. Relief came at the start of the 1960s with the arrival of Wes Montgomery (before his death he too was to have blandness thrust upon him by his record company). Emily Remler, born in New York, raised in Englewood, a student at Berklee School of Jazz, seized on Montgomery's concern with musical narrative and made it the basis of her own style. She seems able to play swiftly yet unhurriedly and — even rarer — to possess the gift of being able to swing at the most leisurely of tempos. Eddie Gomez (bass) and Bob Moses (drums) are sensitive accompanists, while the occasional trumpet playing is the work of John D'Earth, who taught English at Harvard before deciding to opt for jazz.

Withholding Pattern
JOHN SURMAN *ECM* 1295
Sidney Bechet made the first one-man band recording in 1941, carefully fitting drums, bass, piano, clarinet and tenor and soprano saxophones together, all one at a time. John Surman enjoys the advantages of modern technology, able to dub directly on to tape instead of disc, drawing on the capabilities of his synthesisers as well as saxophones and bass clarinet. Building up a performance layer by layer has fascinated Surman ever since the early 1970s. It's the way an improviser can operate as a formal composer, doing his ruminating when it comes to mixing and editing. And practice has made Surman not exactly perfect but decidedly masterful. 'All Cat's Whiskers and Bee's Knees' has one baritone saxophone shadowed by another. Quite a few pieces imply — indirectly but irrevocably — a sense of place. 'Doxology' is churchy, 'Change of Seasons' decidedly open-air, moving from bleakness to spring; 'The Snooper' has the bass clarinet sounding like a crow in a rooky wood. Even 'Wildcat Blues' (no relation to the number Bechet recorded with Clarence Williams's Blue Five in 1923), full of palpitating soprano playing, has moments when the music swirls like a mist of Dartmoor.

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POP

IT WAS ONCE admitted to me, by the singer and writer of a very successful pop group, that he had had a profoundly miserable adolescence and that his pop success now gave him the chance to enact it in public — indeed, to pass through it. This chance he was now exercising with relish.

Adolescence, whether blatant or occluded, has long been at the heart of pop, and the most morbid adolescent wish — and perhaps the most marked — is self-destruction or, at least, a wish to become nothing. This might explain the continuing pop-cult fascination with cases like James Dean and — a late addition — Sid Vicious. It has also, as Pere Ubu note on *Terminal Tower*, become 'essential to certain popular rock & art aesthetics'.

Terminal Tower, which collects material from 1975 to 1980, describes its own parable. Pere Ubu began in total isolation (Cleveland, Ohio) with the perfect statement of the isolate, 'Heart Of Darkness' — a song with real existential terror. They continued through 'dumb teen angst' — self-destruction turned first into metaphor ('30 Seconds Over Tokyo') then into annihilation ('Final Solution') — until the death of founder member Peter Laughner. Brought up short, they opted for a 'disciplined, pragmatic optimism', but, as this record makes clear, they 'grew up' at the expense of resonance. Early Pere Ubu made two formal innovations that still reverberate through pop: the use of the bass (as opposed to the lead or rhythm) guitar to carry melody, and the use of the synthesiser as an instrument with its own sonic capabilities. Their later material reveals discipline and rigour taken to the point of utter abstraction.

White City. Pete Townshend verbalised institutionalised adolescence in a series of brilliant, witty songs in the mid to late Sixties. He was then forced, with The Who, to live out the experience and the contradictions of these feelings in public, under such pressure that it nearly resulted in his own self-destruction. In *White City* — subtitled 'a novel' — Townshend uses the West London estate as a metaphor for the claustrophobic violence of his youth and the loss that he feels in having outgrown it. Bearing in mind that he's working in an 'instinct' medium still publicly defined by adolescence, this is an exercise fraught with contradiction and, like the accompanying video release, *White City* does show the strain.

The problem is that the need for analysis and narrative that Townshend has taken on often works against the directness and emotive quality of the pop form. The album's best moment (and quite the best thing he's recorded for some time) is when Townshend forgets everything and lets rip: on 'Secondhand Love', a stinging, descending invocation of sexual jealousy and doubt.

White City is pertinent because symptomatic of a new condition of pop music: the expanding 'adult' market. Market researchers helped to create the market for adolescence; now they're turning away from it. A recent survey by McCormick-Publicis detects 'exceptionally high unemployment among those aged under 25, and predicts that youth markets such as fashion will suffer as a result'. And in their 1985 Yearbook, the BPI echo, 'It will be of paramount importance to develop and sustain consumer interest and loyalty in the older age groups, particulary the 25-34 year olds.'

I'm Your Man. Where does this leave today's adolescents? With sophistication and an emphasis on pleasure, I would expect. Much of today's chart music suggests that many adolescents, feeling themselves debarred, have turned into ultra-consumers and that they want nothing more than to be adult, or at least to assume a more adult veneer. In this market, Wham! are king and their latest number 1, *I'm*

Your Man, is so perfect that it takes the breath away. As the video makes clear — a rare case of a video that complements — Wham! are supremely confident in their mastery of the pop song as a celebration of dance and sex. *I'm Your Man* is a mixture of seductive Motown and electro forms while George Michael's voice (and lyric) contains the required degree of sexual ambiguity.

I'm Your Man exhibits a rare understanding of its audience. Many current chart songs — as always with the second-rate — copy the surface of the dominant without admitting its complexities: this results in acres of pseudo-sophistication and deserts of ghastly good taste. This pervasive gloss — so suited to radio programming — helps to smother possibility: only those with wit and a sure mastery of the form — like the Pet Shop Boys in *West End Girls* — can break through. This is well illustrated by the fate of two records which, in other times, would have sold very well.

Cut The Crap. During Punk, the Clash made their definition of adolescence — 'What the hell is wrong with me? I'm not what I want to be!' — and then relapsed into stock 'rock rebel' posturing. Their new album, *Cut The Crap*, shows vestiges of this trait and has been roundly castigated on all sides. This is unfair. A careful listen to the songs reveals new life breathed into the now tired punk format and a refusal to apply their previous fierce morality. Singer Joe Strummer has a voice — rare in pop — of real compassion; on songs like 'This Is England' he captures the right note of hurt and visceral rage at what he sees about him.

Psycho Candy. If the Clash illustrate that you can become a mature punk, then the Jesus & Mary Chain delight in setting to music Winnicott's definition of adolescence: 'pretty violent material'. *Psycho Candy* sets 14 songs of paranoia, isolation, sexual ambiguity and rejection against one another, in a form that mixes pure feedback noise with fragile, early Sixties-type pop melodies. The juxtaposition of innocence and brutality is highly effective but, despite virtually unanimous critical raves, not commercially successful. In the end it suggests that adolescence — while highly relevant to 25-35-year-old critics — is something that actual adolescents currently don't want to face. Pop is now grown up: how much that is a denial of real feelings remains to be seen.

CLASSICAL

Verdi: Don Carlos

ABBADO *Deutsche Grammophon* 415 316-2 (four CDs)

Verdi: Rigoletto

SINOPOLI *Philips* 412 592-2 (two CDs)

Don Carlos is undoubtedly the most valuable and instructive of Claudio Abbado's Verdi recordings so far. The performance history of the opera and the textual problems it presents are too complex to describe here, but Abbado satisfies the most demanding purist by conducting the five-act 1886 version of the score, sung in the original French, and including additional scenes from the first version as an appendix. The Italian cast is not ideal; the sound quality is also rather reverberant. But Abbado's sense of the massive shape of the piece is compelling, and Placido Domingo is on his best form as Carlos, calling upon an enormous range of vocal colour. Nicolai Ghiaurov is a fine Inquisitor, Ruggiero Raimondi a noble if slightly underpowered Philip. The women are less consistently satisfying, but the real star of the recording is the work itself: certainly Verdi's grandest opera and for me his most searching and profound achievement too.

The excellence of Giuseppe Sinopoli's *Rigoletto* is less predictable. Traces of the empty brittleness that disfigures so much of his orchestral conducting surface from time to time here, but he takes hold of the drama from the opening chords of the prelude and never allows his grip to falter. Also, he has the benefit of Renato Bruson in the title role, movingly expressive and with bottomless resources of tone and power. Edita Gruberova's stiff, distant Gilda is less engaging, as is Neil Shicoff's Duke, who cannot supply the ringing tenor the role really demands on the highest level. If this *Rigoletto*

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does not sweep all before in the way that the new *Don Carlos* does, it is nevertheless a highly competitive account with Bruson as its star attraction.

Beethoven: Piano Sonatas Op. 7 & Op. 2 no 2
GILELS *Deutsche Grammophon* 415 481-2
Beethoven: Violin Sonatas Op 12
KREMER/ARGERICH *Deutsche Grammophon* 415 138-2
Emil Gilels died in October; one's sadness at the loss of any great pianist was heightened because of the knowledge that he was an artist at the height of his powers, still developing, still with a consummate technical command. In recent years the steady progress of his Beethoven cycle for DG has been a musical event of great importance, supplemented by his all too rare London appearances. It is not just sentiment that makes the latest pairing of sonatas — not at all a conventional coupling — seem so impressive. The intelligence that governs every decision is clear in the placing of each chord, the shape of each phrase. But, as the limpid recording demonstrates, Gilels' sense of colour was also something to marvel at, and few pianists could combine his power with such exquisite refinement. It is hard to think of any living pianist who could play Beethoven with such comprehensive understanding.

Violin and piano duos of the stature of Gidon Kremer and Martha Argerich are almost as rare. Both are highly individual artists, but their partnership proves to be entirely constructive. Argerich takes charge; but she does not dominate, merely leads Kremer into a spirited, highly spontaneous dialogue, that combines prodigious articulacy with relaxed good humour.

Glass/Wilson: Einstein on the Beach
GLASS *CBS* M4 38875 (four records)
Glass: Satyagraha
NEW YORK CITY OPERA *CBS* 13M 39672 (three records)
All those who flocked to the Coliseum in the summer for Glass's *Akhnaten* now have a chance to hear the two works in which he honed (if that's the right word) his operatic technique. *Einstein on the Beach* owes much more to Robert Wilson's stunning visual sense than to Glass's score; without the stage pictures it comes across as a fairly functional sound track with no dramatic shape of itself and which makes for fairly heavy listening. Anyone who can sit through all eight sides without the urge to rush off and do something else at the same time has my profound admiration.

Satyagraha is a different matter. Constance de Jongh's libretto is built up in the same way as *Einstein*: for the physicist read Mahatma Gandhi; group around the central character a sequence of scenes from his early life in South Africa; and set the whole text in Sanskrit from the *Bhagavad-Gita*. It is the ideal recipe for a modish opera and Glass's music is often slyly seductive, tightly scored and overlays its rhythmic tessellations with winsome melodic lines. For ten minutes it is enchanting; after half an hour the penny drops, the lack of interior drama and the reliance on simple accumulation of textures to create tension wears thin, and it becomes nothing more than a minimalist's *Evita*.

Wagner: Tannhäuser
HAITINK *EMI* CDS 7 47296 8 (three CDs)
Wagner: Parsifal
GOODALL *EMI* EX 27 0178 3 (five records)
Tannhäuser may not be many people's favourite Wagner opera, but it deserves better than it has received so far from the gramophone. Bernard Haitink conducts the earlier Dresden version of the score and, by keeping the music always on the move, leaves fewer *longueurs* than usual. He tackles everything head on, obviously having decided that there is no room in this work for modest understatement, and the dramatic bite is the sharper for it. He is abetted by fine choral and orchestral work (from the Bavarian Radio Symphony) and a nicely detailed sound picture. The cast is uneven — what Wagnerian cast today could fail to be? — but Klaus König has the scale and dimension of Tannhäuser's part, if not the ability to phrase it evenly. Lucia Popp is an intelligent if slightly lightweight Elisabeth, Waltraud Meier a reliable Venus. No one would want more than one version of *Tannhäuser* in their record collection but, if you can bear to be without the delights of the later Paris edition, this is the one to get.

Those who heard it still talk in hushed tones of Reginald Goodall's *Parsifal* from 1971 and could not fail to hope for a similar experience from his recording, based on the Welsh National production of three years ago. It's no pleasure to report serious disappointment: the control of line and orchestral texture that were such a hallmark of Goodall's approach are shadows of their former glory here. The orchestral playing is adequate; so is a good deal of the singing, particularly Warren Ellsworth's real flesh-and-blood Parsifal. But some of it just won't do — faded Flowermaidens and an insecure Amfortas — and the moments when the music should set the spine atingle just fail to do so.

Sibelius: Symphony No. 1
RATTLE *EMI* EL 2703094
Nielsen: Symphony No. 4
RATTLE *EMI* 2702604
It has taken a while, but finally the excellence of the City of Birmingham Orchestra under Simon Rattle has been recognised by the record industry. A cycle of Sibelius symphonies has reached the half-way point and the First Symphony is unquestionably the finest release so far, not least because it is coupled with a wondrously refined version of the tone poem *The Oceanides*.

The full blooded orchestral sound that Rattle unleashes for the outer movements of the Sibelius symphony — a ferocious, massive conception — is also turned loose upon Nielsen's Fourth, though here Rattle is more temperate and occasionally just a little too careful. Once more it is the fill-up that tilts one towards favouring this recording: I am not sure I have ever heard Nielsen's little tone poem *Pan and Syrinx* before, but it certainly reveals a new side of a composer one knows largely from his symphonies and concertos, one of refinement and an imaginative ear for orchestral texture. Here is the proof, if it were still needed, that the balance of orchestral power in this country has switched from London to Birmingham; no other British orchestra I have heard this year plays as well as the CBSO.

THEATRE: 1

The mousetrap

Benedict Nightingale

As 1985 comes to an end, British theatre is deeply shadowed by the dangers of playing safe

THE KEY MOMENT of 1985, at least in the theatre, came at the Guildhall in February. Onto the rostrum stalked a bristling Peter Hall, nominally to give Michael Frayn the *Standard*'s best-dramatist award for his *Benefactors*, actually to launch a sudden, violent attack on government arts policy.

What did the Thatcher administration think it was doing? Didn't it realise its parsimony was endangering one of our greatest and most profitable national assets, the theatre? 'Everything we've painstakingly built up in the last 30 years is being destroyed,' cried Sir Peter — and handed the usual statuette to Frayn, who looked as stunned as the theatrical faithful festively gathered below. We'd expected a generous ladling of the quips and courtesies customary on such occasions and, instead, were hearing a rousing English *Marseillaise*.

It was the opening sally in a war that escalated rapidly. Sir Peter closed the Cottesloe. Max Stafford-Clark, whose Royal Court received no more from the Arts Council for 1985-6 than for 1984-5, was reduced to sending begging letters to the critics, of all forlorn financial expedients. At best he could expect to produce just eight plays in his two playhouses, less than half the number of a decade before; at worst, he would have to close the Theatre Upstairs, a scarcely less important creative source than the Cottesloe. At the Lyric, Hammersmith, there was evidence that the fiscal pincers weren't on and from the Arts Council only. For the third year running the local potentates refused to increase the theatre's grant and, when its management did their sums, they found they'd have to cut its productions from six to four, its playing weeks from 47 to 27.

At the year's end the battlefield seems quieter. William Rees-Mogg is no longer publicly comparing Hall with Cardinal Wolsey, ruined by Henry VIII for his hubris and greed. Nor has he resigned in protest against the size of next year's arts budget, since that was less destructively stingy than had been feared. The Cottesloe is open again, thanks to a special GLC grant. But that doesn't, of course, mean that the conflict is over, or fears about the eventual body-count less. The Thatcher government, through its new arts minister, is still enjoining on our theatres a reliance on business sponsorship and other forms of philanthropy which, if it brings profit to anyone, will help only the large, established and privileged, never the small, obscure, daring, controversial, dangerous. No one can say what the long-term impact of the abolition of the metropolitan authorities will be, nor the effect on London in particular of the Arts

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Council's new manure policy, the boastfully-titled 'Glory of the Garden'. Nor can we be sure that Rees-Mogg isn't reading the runes correctly when he warns that the next phase of neo-Conservatism will reduce public expenditure to killer-levels: 'There will be no protected categories of state support, not admirals, not farmers, not doctors, not the unemployed, not the arts.'

It's a sign of the times that we should be looking gratefully to the likes of Mogg as a bulwark against Tory axemanship. The future of our theatre remains quite as worrying as Hall prophesied and its present is only superficially healthier than he suggested. The mood is still bearish at the Court, the Lyric and scores of other places, not least his own cultural complex. Peter Gill's season of new work at the Cottesloe ran about as long as our sudden Indian summer, leaving only *Pravda* to conceal the National's embarrassing barrenness in an area where it surely has a primal duty to be fruitful. Now, I much enjoyed Alan Ayckbourn's *Chorus of Disapproval*, I managed somehow to respect Peter Shaffer's *Yonadab* and I expect to be amused by Neil Simon's *Brighton Beach Memoirs*, due to join the repertoire in February. But isn't it disturbing that Ayckbourn, Shaffer, Simon should more or less sum up the Olivier and Lyttelton's contemporary contribution in 1985-6? Should our most important subsidised theatre really be presenting the kind of mainstream work that would have any commercial impresario reaching for the phone and the cheque book? What's going on in Hall's great Oz on the South Bank?

What's going on, of course, is a perfectly logical and rational response to our tightwad times: a fear of failure, the greater because the number of plays in the repertoire has had to be reduced, and a matching determination to minimise or eliminate the risk-factor. Those motives are increasingly apparent in the National's choice of revivals, too. Not long ago it gave us *Lorenzaccio, Danton's Death, Galileo, Schweyk in the Second World War*: big, bold productions of big, bold plays. This last year is more likely to be remembered for a swanky, shallow *Love for Love* and a *Government Inspector* whose subtleties were sacrificed to crude comic effects and, more specifically, the slender yet showy acting talent of Rik Mayall. We've come to accept that the commercial theatre must increasingly depend on movie or TV stars if it's to beguile the punters. The price of seeing Tennessee Williams's fascinating *Sweet Bird of Youth* was putting up with a charismatic but emotionally craven performance from Lauren Bacall; that of having *Jumpers* in the West End was Paul Eddington, so much less suited to the part of Stoppard's frazzled metaphysician than Michael Hordern, who created it. But at the *National*? Have we come to *that*?

Let not exasperation unbalance me. There *was Pravda*, whose seemingly grotesque prophecies about Fleet Street get truer by the day. There *was* a rare and underrated revival of Jean-Jacques Bernard's *Martine* in the Lyttelton. And at the RSC there was, on the face of it, positive artistic audacity. In the Pit we had Louise Page's *Golden Girls*, Robert Holman's admirable *Today*, a brave if botched revival of Strindberg's *Dream Play*, Bond's *War Trilogy* and as thoroughgoing an attempt to put Howard Barker firmly on our mental maps as we've yet seen. Stratford was more than usually lively and, down at the Barbican, Antony Sher was astonishing the cognoscenti with his preying-mantis Richard III and a droll monk in Peter Barnes's black-death saga, *Red Noses*. Yet what was a big musical, co-produced with a commercial management and staged with a mainly ad-hoc cast, doing for an entire autumn in the RSC's main house? I liked *Les Miserables* far more than most of my fellow-scribes; but I had to agree that its occupation of the Barbican was another sign of the times, destined as it obviously was for a money-making run on Shaftesbury Avenue and (maybe) Broadway.

We should not forget the incidental gains paradoxically provided by the financial squeeze. One of the most striking and least sung of the year's achievements was Joint Stock's production of Stephen Wakelam's *Deadlines*, a quasi-documentary picture of trimming journalists which, to speak plainly, made *Pravda* look rather too self-indulgently the 'comedy of excess' its authors confessed it to be. Its story, too, traversed the nation, cutting cinematically from location to location; but its effects were achieved with little if any scenery and a tiny cast prepared to double, treble, quadruple its roles. In other words, financial stringency meant that the performers were challenged, the audience forced to use its imagination, in ways impossible under comfier circumstances. Indeed, 1985 offered example after example, if not of potted epic, at least of inventively austere staging. In the past week alone we've had Richard Eyre's spare yet fluent production of Mamet's *Edmond* at the Court, a sort of inverted *Pilgrim's Progress* in mean, greedy New York, and Mike Alfreds's superb *Cherry Orchard* at the resurgent Cottesloe: blue flats, white curtains, a few chairs and all around some of the physically boldest, most emotionally volatile performances the National has offered us.

Yet even here a doubt intrudes. Why is the theatre doing what's most people's favourite Chekhov play for the second time within six years? The signs are that we'll see more and more opting for the 'safe' choice in our subsidised theatres; more co-production with West End managements; more plays put on with a commercial future in mind. That's not altogether a pity, since it might help create a better, brighter Shaftesbury Avenue, with the likes of Charles Sturridge's revival of *The Seagull* coming from Hammersmith, Pam Gems's *Camille* from Stratford and (let's hope) Gorky's *Vassa* from Greenwich. But it brings with it awful dangers. Why should the public subsidise safe plays, mainstream plays, commercial plays, popular plays, at all?

This is the real problem. Government parsimony is gradually pushing the theatre into the position of not meriting subsidy in the first place; and this fell circle — cheeseparing policies bringing about cheesy plays bringing about more cheeseparing and more cheesiness — looks only too likely to become still more vicious. And where then will we find the sort of work that could and did still illuminate 1985 — Anthony Hopkins in *Pravda*, Juliet Stevenson in the RSC's *As You Like It*, Wallace Shawn's *Aunt Dan and Lemon* at the Court, Simon Callow in *Kiss of the Spider Woman* at the Bush, Ronald Harwood's *Deliberate Death of a Polish Priest* at the Almeida, Hugh Quarshie in *The Great White Hope* at the Tricycle? □

ART

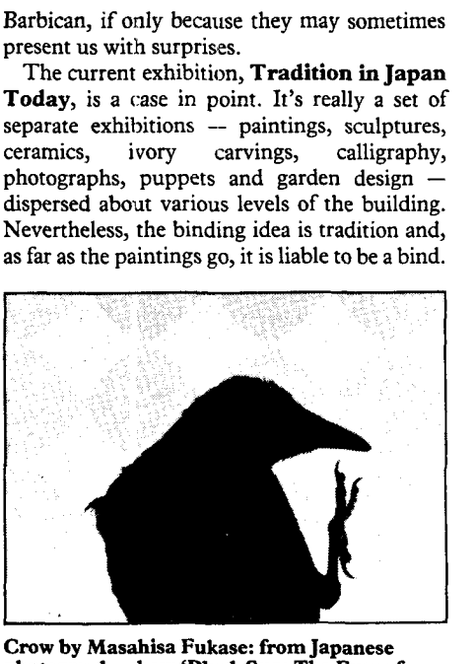
Ancient and modern

John Spurling

Toki: Tradition in Japan Today
Barbican
Reconstructions: Avant-Garde Art in Japan 1945-65
Museum of Modern Art, Oxford, until 9 February, then Edinburgh

THE ART CRITIC of the *Guardian*, Waldemar Januszcak, was very severe with the Barbican a couple of weeks ago for its 'over-reliance on business sponsorship'. Since the Barbican is owned, funded and managed by the Corporation of the City of London, this seems rather like attacking a windmill for its over-reliance on wind. The Barbican does mount exhibitions which are more obviously commercial than those at, say, the Hayward or the Tate and the goods on display tend to belong to the less critically respectable areas of the art world: the traditional, the flashy, the popular. But we subsidise the Hayward and the Tate precisely to preserve and encourage the best — or at least the prevailing — artistic standards, so there is surely room for the looser and more dubious standards of the Barbican, if only because they may sometimes present us with surprises.

The current exhibition, **Tradition in Japan Today**, is a case in point. It's really a set of separate exhibitions — paintings, sculptures, ceramics, ivory carvings, calligraphy, photographs, puppets and garden design — dispersed about various levels of the building. Nevertheless, the binding idea is tradition and, as far as the paintings go, it is liable to be a bind.



Crow by Masahisa Fukase: from Japanese photography show 'Black Sun: The Eyes of Four' also at Oxford Museum of Modern Art

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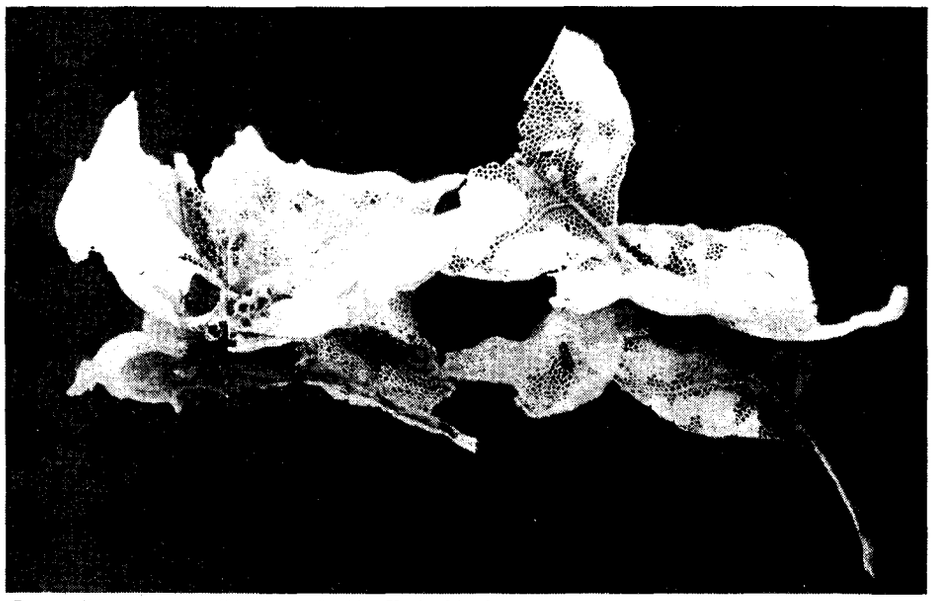


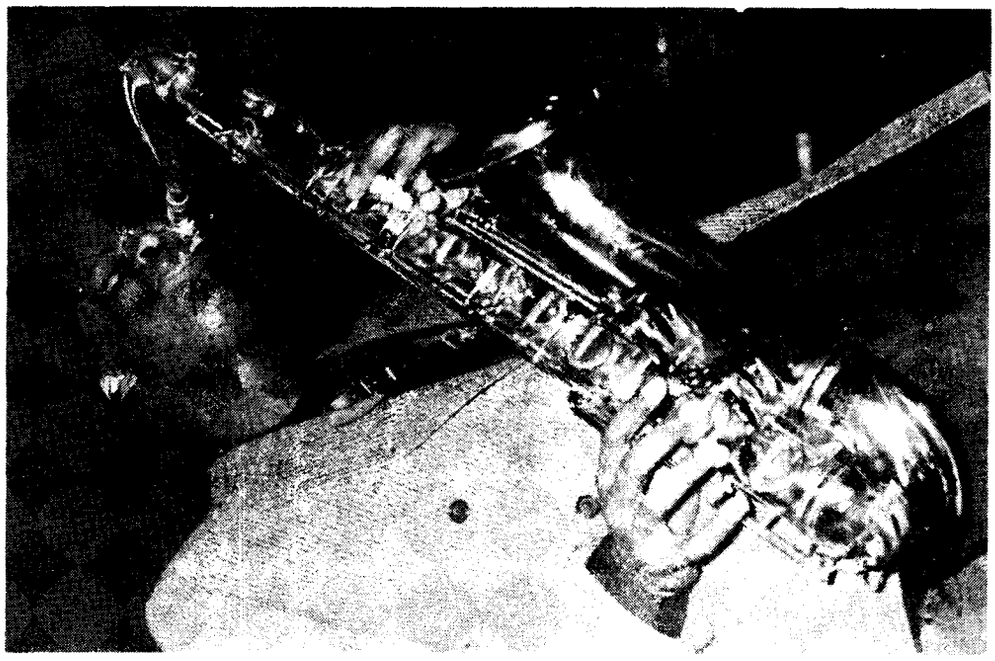
Impossible made possible: ivory leaf by Kodo Okuda

The reliance on traditional materials, methods and subjects creates a sort of vacuum between hand and heart (or sensibility, feeling, whatever you like to call it). The highly-skilled artist reclines into a cushion of ready-made expression and more often than not presents the viewer with a lifeless piece of schmaltz.

There are exceptions, though, especially the monochrome landscapes. Koizumi's 'The Sound of Winter' — groups of feathery evergreens in snow and mist — and Kayama's double screen painting 'Hueng Shen' — sharp mountain peaks in rain and rising cloud — are so traditionally Japanese that it is as if they were Constables or Turners by contemporary English artists. These two Japanese artists were born in 1944 and 1927 respectively, yet they find in their standard subjects the freshness and intensity that Westerners are schooled to associate only with originality and innovation.

The truth is, of course, that innovation for its own sake is just as much of a bind as tradition. The Museum of Modern Art at Oxford has also gone Japanese this Christmas, but, following its own lights as steadily as the Barbican, is concentrating on the *avant-garde* of the period 1945-65. The exhibition begins with a large 1948 canvas by Fukuzawa of heaped-up bodies on a flat plain against a blue sky, entitled *Lost War* and painted in a style which may owe something to Dali but looks far more recent, as if it belonged to our current fashion for spoof baroque. Satirical surrealism, politically-slanted realism and combinations of the two were the earliest Japanese responses to the trauma of their lost war and its American-dominated aftermath. By the Fifties they were into abstraction and, by the Sixties, into their own versions of Pop, Happenings and Neo-Dada. Except for an extra charge of desolation and desperation, there is nothing much here that Westerners don't already know from their own *avant-garde* of yesteryear. Some of the abstract paintings, especially those by Shimamoto and Yoshihara, are memorable for their successful integration of savage expressionism with aesthetic delicacy, but the sculptures are quite as imaginatively feeble as those representing the traditional camp on the Barbican's terrace. The Oxford exhibition, incidentally, is also backed, like the Barbican one, by the Japan Foundation (counterpart of the British Council) and business-sponsored.

Where tradition scores, of course, is in craft rather than art and the Barbican's star exhibits are Kodo Okuda's carvings of dead leaves, the Japanese garden and the puppets used once a year for Shinto-festivals. The point of the leaves is that they appear to be impossible — minutely detailed reproductions carved in ivory and



SWING INTO
THE NEW YEAR
WITH *THE WIRE*

THE WIRE
THE MAGAZINE.
THE MUSIC.

THE
wire

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coloured with lacquer glazes of what in nature is both incredibly complex (twists, filigree, ragged edges, holes, folds, ribs, changing shades of colour) and only just there. Okuda also makes invented shapes in ivory, but they are bland and dull — he needs the challenge of measuring up to actuality.

Japanese gardens rely on almost the opposite principle: the thinning out, miniaturisation and simplification of nature's prolixity, grandeur and complexity. Three rocks, some moss, quantities of white sand and a rake transform part of the Barbican's lower gallery into a symbolic temple garden; nearby is an invitingly uncluttered scholar's study beside a tiny water garden; and round the corner an enclosure of bamboos and a pavilion for the tea ceremony. In the presence of these gardens the whole idea of tradition versus innovation seems irrelevant: they are refinements which simply require to be made and experienced in the present — they deliberately nullify time.

The elaborately costumed puppets are mostly used on chariots which are drawn through the streets like floats, while the puppets, manipulated by puppeteers concealed inside the chariots, perform stories and acrobatics. Some are mechanical robots, others pretend to be, while actually being worked by strings. The custom dates back at least to the 17th century, declined with the Meiji Restoration and the entry of Japan into the modern world, but was revived after the Second World War and is now again flourishing in many different towns and villages. The puppets might, I suppose, be made to work more efficiently and miraculously by electronic circuits, just as the chariots might be powered by engines instead of humans wearing special shirts called *happi*, but their rather uncertain movements and the numbers of people required to operate them emphasise the ritual nature of tradition. It is not what has been done before that matters so much as the fact that it is being done again now. The present absorbs the past. Happi Christmas! □

ARCHITECTURE

No stone unturned

Jules Lubbock

The future of popular architecture could lie entwined in our gothic past

THE BUILDING which has given me the most pleasure over the past year is over 600 years old. The Lady Chapel of Ely Cathedral was built between 1320 and 1345 to celebrate the then flourishing cult of the Virgin, and is a free-standing building adjoining the north transept. Its basic shape is very simple — just a tall undivided chamber about 100 feet long and 50 wide and somewhat taller than it is broad. It has five pointed windows along each side, separated by the substantial piers which support the vaults, and it has a large window at each end.

The glory of the Lady Chapel, however, does not rest upon pure architecture but the interweaving of architecture, narrative sculpture and carved natural ornament. That is not in itself unusual in Gothic edifices but, at Ely, the carvings, instead of overlaying the structure in tiers, are interlaced with it. Right round the lower part of the chapel, beneath the windows, run the niches of the monks' stalls, each with its own arched canopy so adorned as to defy description. However, one can but try.

Faceless figure surrounded by ogees

Each of these canopies is supported by a pair of pilasters that rise above the springing of the arch till they meet the cornice that connects the points; and all the triangular spaces between arch and pilaster are filled with carved scenes from the Life of the Virgin. In itself this is not so remarkable, but this alternation of pilaster, story, arch, story, pilaster is merely the basic structure for an elaboration which parallels the new polyphonic music of the 1320s. For one thing, these are no ordinary pointed arches but what are called ogees. Instead of each side of the arch curving straight round to meet the other in a point, they wind in a delicate S-curve first towards one another and then away and draw up to a point like that of a tear drop or a elm leaf. As if this were too simple a dance to make the stones perform, the arch as a whole flows outwards from the wall in the same serpentine curve to form the projecting canopy, so that the whole surface of each wall ripples in all directions.

This pattern is then varied by making every fourth canopy on the pier between the windows larger and more elaborate than the others. Whereas these rise to the full height of the cornice, the others are lower and enclosed in a triangular pediment. In addition each major arch is divided in two by a pair of smaller ogee arches which make a leaf-shaped opening between them in which there sits a figure. And behind each minor arch is a pair of pointed niches with a statue standing on the column between them while another statue once stood above on the tip of the arch. The edges of all this tracery also ripple with an ogee pattern and many of the mouldings are carved with the leaves of plants and flowers. To complete the effect there are little comic and grotesque heads on each capital and each pinnacle of the pilasters.

These alone have escaped the full wrath of the iconoclasts of the Reformation, for all the seated and standing figures and all the expressive features of the figures in the stories, their heads and hands, have been smashed, so that it is sadly almost impossible to experience the intended effect of the whole in which the sacred story, allegorical virtues, saints and sybils, architecture and animal and plant life were interwoven and counterpointed.

The Lady Chapel survived intact for only two centuries. 1985 is the 450th anniversary of the Dissolution of the Monasteries and, in 1539, the reforming Bishop of Ely ordered that 'all Images, Relics, Shrines etc. be so totally demolished and obliterated that no remains or memory be found of them'. What we are left with is not inconsiderable: a sense of an art which encompassed the whole of life from the story of the Virgin's life to the grotesque figures, some of them a bit diabolic, like an ammonite (based perhaps upon one found in the stone) reinvested with a horned creature, and sometimes comic, like a tiny man clinging for dear life to the underneath of an arch with his bum in the air, or a pig with a pobbly nose.

What was destroyed, however, was the tradition of carved masonry which drew both its decoration and its structural forms from the woods and fields and which was, as a result, universally popular. An appreciation of classical architecture, in contrast, depends to a great extent upon a knowledge of antecedents, of elaborate rules and abstract mathematical proportions. Yet the pompous and straitlaced architecture of Imperial Rome, where even cracking a joke depends upon knowledge of a classical tag, seems to be the currently favoured alternative to Modernism.

I can think of only two people in Britain, neither of them professional architects, who are building gothic houses today, and they with their own hands: the painter Graham Ovenden and a graduate art history student whom I teach, Robert Brownell. Most architects are such sheep that I admit to little hope for an immediate Gothic Revival. But in time — who knows? □

THEATRE: 2

Fit for gods

Boyd Tonkin

Charlatan? Genius? With his Paris production of a Hindu epic, PETER BROOK is finally answering the question

EARLY IN THE vast Sanskrit epic the *Mahabharata* — whose first written versions date from 500 BC and whose length adds up to 15 times that of the Bible — the great king of the god-begotten Pandavas, Yudishsthira, gambles away his birthright on the throw of a dice.

Thirteen years of exile and wandering ensue: a

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period of discovery, doubt and reflection. At last the Pandavas recover the mastery of the world through conflict and cunning and Yudishsthira rules again, 'the best of kings', but always prey to curiosity and discontent.

Around 13 year ago, at the height of his reputation as the leading British director of his generation, Peter Brook took what many thought to be a wild risk in leaving the subsidised security of the Royal Shakespeare Company to found his *Centre International de Créations Théâtrales* in Paris. It became a sort of invisible college, whose personnel and whereabouts shifted as its projects grew ever stranger and grander. As befits a prince in exile, his ventures included the questionable (*Orghast*, which added lustre to the Shah's fading tyranny at the Shiraz Festival) and the eccentric (an odd film about the mystic and con-artist Gurdjieff, *Meetings with Remarkable Men*) as well as such outright triumphs as the Persian fable *Conference of the Birds* and the African tales of *The Ik*. He moved simultaneously forwards and backwards: beyond the humanistic frontiers, tragic and comic, of Western theatre, while returning to the sacred and popular performance traditions of Asia and Africa.

His piracy of non-European arts, his insistence on long months of research and preparation with cosmopolitan casts and the chronic mobility of the final product — never too fixed in shape or place — have meant that a slight aura of the poseur or trickster has continued to cling to him and his work. But, at this year's Avignon Festival, in Italy, Greece and (since November) at Brook's Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord in Paris, the three-part version of *Le Mahabharata* has conquered sceptics unmoved by years of theoretical apologias.

In choosing the most pervasive of the Hindu epics as their source, Brook and his script-writer Jean-Claude Carrière (who worked with Luis Bunuel on films such as *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*) were following a beaten track. The most recent of the *Mahabharata*'s adaptors, the film director Satyajit Ray, was defeated by the sheer expense of time and funds demanded by even the most breathless abridgment of the classical text's 12,000 pages. Brook and Carrière have worked intermittently on the project since 1975, when both were spellbound by stories told them over dinner by the Sanskrit scholar Philippe Lavastine. Their final adaptation aims to succeed by fidelity to the spirit rather than the letter of the original. It is ruthlessly selective; it simplifies the narrative structure; its words are simple and clear; its images dense and haunting, like the urgent condensations of a dream. Above all, there is no fake ethnicity. According to Brook, 'We knew that it was a question not of imitation, but suggestion. We didn't presume to recreate the Dravidian or Aryan India of 3,000 years ago. We didn't presume to present the symbolic forms of Hindu philosophy. In music, costume and movement, we tried to suggest the presence of India, without wanting to seem what we were not.'

In the opening section, *The Game of Dice*, the illiterate bard Vyasa brings into being the divine and human world of the Pandavas and their rivals. *The Exile in the Forest* traces the history of the five Pandavas and their polyandric wife Draupadi through the loss and sorrow of their disinheritance. Helped by the archer Arjuna and the sly, shape-shifting god Krishna, the Pandavas regain their dominion in *The War*, at the cost of a carnage that leaves the earth sated with death and chaos. In paradise, the final scene reflects the first, as the two tribes and their deities feast and laugh to candlelight and music, watched over once more by the poet: creator of 'the great story of humankind'.

Le Mahabharata lingers in the memory as an anthology of movement and gesture. Ruinous global war becomes a whirling mass of wooden wheels, screens and ladders. Draupadi resists capture and rape at the hands of the Kandavas with an endlessly unfurling sari that entangles her pursuer. On a bed of arrows the pacific sage Bhishma awaits death, slowly brought him by Krishna in the shape of a single shaft from Arjuna's quiver. In these and other moments, Chloé Obolensky's designs and Toshi Tsuchitori's music explore a range of colours and tones appropriate to the stories and their setting without falling into what the former has called 'the triple trap of folkloric imitation, re-interpretation and fancy dress'.

Brook's company bears witness to every possible connection that a modern multi-national troupe (from 16 different countries) can make with an ancient source without pretending to efface or forget the distance between them and it. Given the unity and reciprocity of the acting, the astonishing diversity of the performers' backgrounds seems even more remarkable. To name only three: Sotigui Kouyate (Bhishma) is director of a state dance and drama company in Upper Volta; Andrzej Seweryn (as the Kaurava monarch Duryodhana) a regular lead in Wajda's movies (*Man of Iron, Man of Marble, Danton*);

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Mallika Sarabhai (Draupadi) one of the greatest Indian classical dancers of her time. As in the universe of the *Mahabharata* itself, Brook's collaborators move towards harmony through — not in spite of — difference and division.

At present, when judgment can only be provisional, the trilogy looks like both an end and a beginning. It distils the experiments of the last 11 years, yet refuses to solidify. With a company prepared to stay together until 1987, opportunities open for constant renewal and variation. Like his mentor Artaud, Brook aspires to a theatre without repetition, where nothing should happen twice.

With Carrière, he is currently at work on an English translation of *Le Mahabharata*, which will continue its international travelling next year and beyond — with versions projected for India, Australia, the US and perhaps even Britain. Such events never come to pass in an immaterial void; Brook's recent patrons have included the French Ministry of Culture and the Rockefeller Foundation. Their money has been well spent. For Yudishsthira has re-possessed his kingdom, aided by craft and audacity as well as virtue, and armoured with the favour of the gods. □

Michael Bennett

Apocalypse Hogmanay? Nastassja and Sir John brood on the state of the cinema.

FILMS

My crystal balls

John Coleman

THANKS TO A DASH of divination and those good friends in the industry who have allowed me access to finished product, work-in-progress and even script outlines while modestly insisting on anonymity, I am privileged to present some sneak-previews of what awaits us in the New Year. Remember: you read it here first.

A Man Called Apocalypse. Chuck Norris début-directs himself in this death-dealing global epic, President Reagan's new favourite movie, as the laconic loner of the title, an ex-Marine sergeant soured by the softies who threaten civilisation and, incidentally, had him court-martialled for breaking the legs of a platoon during unarmed combat practice. 'Cal', with a mother who screams whenever he enters a room, is hauled into a one-man crusade. Terrorists skyjack a crowded flight he's on: a hand-grenade, a parachute hastily rigged from his outsize burnous, and down he drops as chunks of passengers and baddies alike fly through the air. Landing naked on a gang of punks booting a cat, he emits a roar that shatters their ear-drums and, alas, does for pussy. After cleaning up New York's corrupt fuzz and wrecking the cocaine trade (sly humour as folks are shown drinking again at Hollywood parties), brutal intervention in Beirut, which suddenly goes quiet, and the acquisition of an Arctic wolf, Cal aims for the big one, the Kremlin. As 5,000 crack troops advance behind massed tanks, he speaks: 'Hey, Wolf, let's do the show here!'; and the screen erupts. Where Cal hid that guided missile only his maker knows.

The Tribe. Warm-hearted if bemusing to-and-fro among 13 LA college-leavers, using a lot of fresh young talents. Bobby, Lesley, Scotty, Jamie, Charley, Carrie, Marty, Howie, Willy, Ronnie, Penny, Freddie and rebellious ring-leader Seth Baker are first met with in August, 1966, lying around fornicating and generally doing their thing, deeply despondent because hero John Lennon has recanted his 'more popular than Jesus Christ' crack: Seth stops sensitive Howie from wrist-slashing. August, 1976, and the 'tribe' re-unites at Madison Square Garden to hear Elton John: Marty and Bobby have come out of the closet, Howie has stayed in, Carrie is married to hash-slinger Freddie in Denver but secretly puts out for airline pilot Willy during stop-overs. While Elton goes for a leak, Seth tells Carrie to 'straighten up'. August, 1986, has yet to be finalised but is likely to end in weepie get-together (minus Howie, who managed those wrists) in Seth's Las Vegas casino. Great period-sense, pop and rock galore. Proposed UK title: *Baker's Dozen.*

Hogmanay I. In the Appalachians huddles corpse-strewn township of MacArber, clinging fearfully to traditions of its Scottish founding fathers. Someone is chopping up blonde teenagers to make human haggises tasting like the real thing. At high-school hop on 31 December matters come to a hideous head when brunette Morag (ravishing Nastassja Kinski), popular pipe-majorette, abruptly stops skirling. As Murdo, the dapper, protective school-caretaker, Sir John Gielgud affords horror-show-stealing cameo, with an accent you could cut with a dirk: 'That's nae the MacArber clan tartan. That's bluid!' Directed to the hilt by tyro Chip Kowalski, ex-Corman clapper-boy, and reportedly playing to packed clinics. My tip: expect a sequel.

The Angry Aquarium. Image overtakes image in this sumptuously salty submarine poem (fertile creation of Coppola protégé Huywent Thattaweigh), where to expect linear meaning as cruising aqua-lunged bikies intercut with shots of an Oedipal encounter inside a graffiti-sprayed whale — just two of the more plangent visual fragments — is to miss the whole point. The message is 'written' in the medium: water. A sound-track skilfully exploiting 'I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles', scored for conch, provides exquisite aural counterpoint.

Studs, Slaves and Sillies: The Problem of 'Men' in Cinema. An educative NFT season. I quote from the programmer's Introduction:

> Garbo, Stanwyck, Doris Day, all foregrounded stars whose roles as signifiers are well documented. Time, perhaps, for an in-depth study of where what we choose to stigmatise as 'men' fit into the iconography of film. *Lassie Comes Home*, after all, disguised a male collie. In *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, a 'snow-job' may be discerned, practised on homunculi whose very nomenclature matriarchally condescends (disregarding 'Doc's' function as potential obstetrician): dopey, sneezy, sleepy, grumpy, bashful, happy, indeed . . .

Food for thought here, with *The Odd Couple, Earth, Annie Get Your Gun, The Grapes of Wrath* and a dozen other texts also on the agenda.

Three Sisters. This should put paid for good to that absurd *canard* about Hollywood's reluctance to furnish meaty roles for women. One has only to look at Meryl Streep beautifully *not* going to town in Tobe Hooper's prestigious re-make of Chekhov's classic, to hear the intensity — and British pronunciation — she brings to the end of Act Two (the stage divisions are marked by odd axe-blow wipes: *The Chainsaw Cherry Orchard,* Mr Hooper?) and Irena's 'Mosc-oh! Mosc-oh! Mosc-oh!' But if her Irena rises marvellously to every occasion, what shall one say of her black-garbed, fitfully gay Masha, married to the intolerable school-master Koolyghin, if not that her hair-style is different and her voice higher-pitched? And to Ms Streep, of course, belong the closing words, as her Olga, her tender, philosophical Olga, comforts Ms Streep's Irena and Ms Streep's Masha. The band plays, life must have meaning: 'If only we knew! If only we knew!'.

Happy viewing. □

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NATIONAL THEATRE 01-928 2252. Olivier (open stage) 'Yonadab', 'A Chorus of Disapproval', 'The Real Inspector Hound'/'The Critic'. Lyttelton (proscenium stage) 'Love for Love', 'Mrs Warren's Profession'. Cottesloe (Small auditorium) 'The Cherry Orchard', 'The Road to Mecca'. Theatre closed 24 25 Dec. See daily press for dates and times or ring recorded information 01-928 2256.

HALF MOON THEATRE 213 Mile End Rd., London E1. 01-790 4000. **DRACULA** by Chris Bond, eves 7.30pm. **'A dazzling blend of hoary Hammer Horror and panto slapstick'** — Time Out.

BLOOMSBURY THEATRE 01-387 9629 11 Dec-4 Jan, 8pm. **Harvey And The Wallbangers** in **Park The Tiger.** 26 Dec-11 Jan, 11am & 2.30pm **The Gingerbread Man.**

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MELONS

a new play by Bernard Pomerance, the award-winning author of The Elephant Man. opens The Pit Season from 11 December.

RSC

THE PIT

Set in New Mexico at the turn of the century 'Melons' portrays the dramatic meeting between two old adversaries from the Apache Wars.

Cast includes David Burke John Cater Susan Colverd Ben Kingsley Anton Lesser

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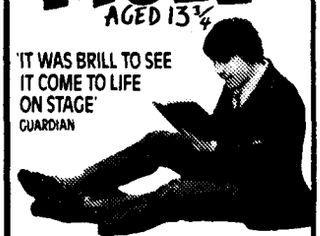

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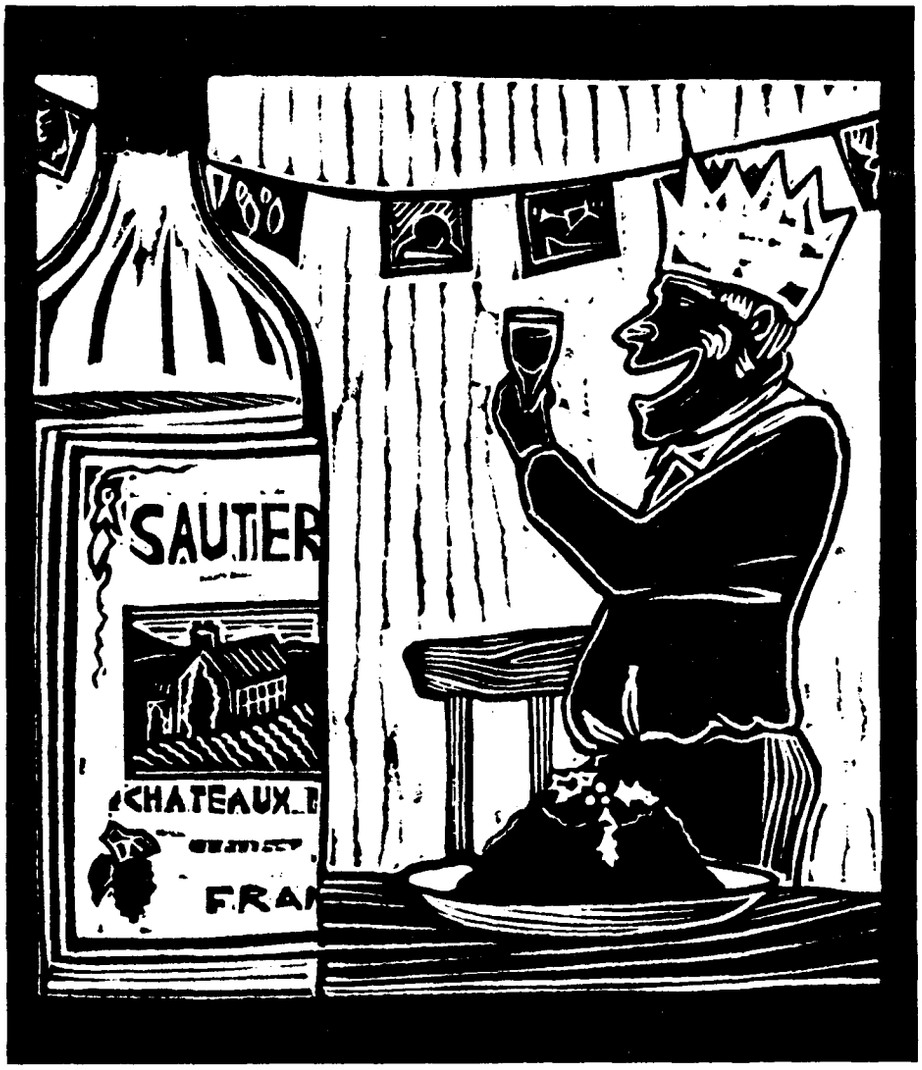

Henry Iles

Sweet talk

Stephen Brook

AS YOU COME to the end of another blockbusting Christmas lunch, you may be tempted to heed the conventional wisdom and reach for the post-prandial port.

Think again. Rich peppery mouthfuls of good port at four in the afternoon are guaranteed to send most of us under the table. I'd rather be refreshed than drugged, however deliciously, at that hour. Instead, wheel off the revolting Christmas pudding and mince pies, and treat the company to a bottle of good dessert wine. A bottle will serve eight generously, 12 less generously. And since such wines are best served lightly chilled, they will wake you up after the rigours of lunch.

Dessert wines remain out of fashion, which is good news for the consumer, as it means that many excellent bargains are available. Indeed, any good dessert wine is a bargain, simply because the cost of production is rarely reflected in the price. Since the wine is made from overripe grapes, they can be picked only late in the year, when the danger of the entire crop being wiped out by mould and frost is considerable. Moreover, since the grapes must be picked at their peak of ripeness, many vineyards must organise three or more pickings according to conditions. The wonder is not that dessert wines are expensive, but that they aren't far more expensive.

Most affordable dessert wines come from France, and I've blind-tasted 27 of them. What I was looking for was a balance between the sweet, luscious flavour of overripe grapes (sometimes affected by noble rot, which concentrates the sweetness further) and acidity, which gives the wine zest and keeps it from cloying in the mouth. Easily the best wine is **1980 Ch Rieussec**, one of the very finest Sauternes. At £4.75 a half-bottle (Sainsbury) it's not cheap, but the wine has a beautiful colour and bouquet, great richness and a delicious, slightly astringent length that prolongs the flavour in the mouth long after you've put the glass down. Sauternes is usually drinkable when young, but it's a wine that, if well made, will develop in bottle for 20 years or more. The 1979 Ch Filhot (Waitrose, £7.95), 1980 Ch Coutet (Sainsbury, £3.99 a half) and 1980 Ch Lafaurie-Peyraguey (Sainsbury, £6.75) are all good attractive wines, but far from exciting at this stage in their development. In this price bracket I was more taken by the 1980 Ch Doisy-Dubroca (Oddbins, £7.85), oaky and intense yet soft in the mouth, a fresh and lively wine. If you prefer a sweeter, less oaky style, try the luscious 1983 Ch Lamothe (Majestic, £7.69; £3.99 half). Better value is the excellent 1981 Ch Bastor Montagne (Waitrose, £5.35); it's enjoyable this year, but put a couple more bottles away for future years.

The vineyards adjoining the prestigious Sauternes and Barsac districts also produce dependable dessert wines, though they rarely have the individuality and distinction of well-made Sauternes. The 1979 Ch Loupiac-Gaudiet (Dominic, £3.99) is a typical example, sweet but lightweight, pleasant but not inspiring. The bargain in this category is the 1983 Clos Saint Georges (Sainsbury, £2.98), light but very well made. Sainsbury and Waitrose both offer Premières Côtes de Bordeaux at just over £2 per bottle, but they're bland wines compared to the Clos Saint Georges. You won't regret spending the extra pound. The generic Sauternes and Barsac I tasted tended to be nondescript; the best was the basic Waitrose Sauternes at £3.55.

The people of Monbazillac, 50 miles east of Sauternes, claim that their sweet wines are equal to, if not superior to, their better known neighbour's. It isn't true, but their wines can be astonishingly good and astonishingly inexpensive. Of the three I tasted the 1982 Monbazillac (Dominic £2.99) and 1981 Ch Pion (Majestic, £3.59) were moderately sweet and fresh — reasonably good value — but the outstanding wine was the **1977 Ch Bellevue** (Waitrose, £3.49). It triumphs because of its balance, that elusive quality so essential to making first-rate dessert wines. Although very sweet, it has excellent acidity and delightful flavour. It's a steal at the price.

Sauternes may be out of fashion, but Muscat de Beaumes de Venise hasn't diminished in popularity. Unlike Sauternes, this wine is made from the distinctive Muscat grape. I tasted the prestigious producer Jaboulet's version (Majestic, £7.79) against the standard Cooperative wine (Sainsbury, £4.99) and preferred the latter. At the price it's a good buy, if you like the style of the wine: pungently aromatic, intensely grapy and high in alcohol. Collectors of curiosities might enjoy the Californian Ch La Salle (Majestic, £4.49), unmistakably a Muscat though not identified as such. It's slightly petillant, grapy and fresh, though rather expensive for such an uncomplicated wine. Better value, and mercifully low in alcohol, is Fontanafredda's gulpable 1983 Moscato d'Asti (majestic, £2.99), a good choice for those who find the rich and honeyed flavours of Sauternes and Monbazillac too much of a good thing.

The sweet wines of the Loire are less well known than they ought to be, probably because they are too acidic and bitter to be drunk with pleasure until at least ten years old. So take advantage of dwindling stocks of **1964 Moulin Touchais** (Sainsbury, £4.95), which I found absolutely delicious and ludicrously underpriced. Another curiosity is the splendid 5 Puttyonos Hungarian Tokay, available in useful 50 cl bottles at under £4 (Sainsbury and Oddbins). With its amber colour and appley aromas, this too is a great and under-rated wine. □

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Naseem Khan
Rocky on

YOU DON'T EXPECT to get frisked when you go into a cinema: an ordinary, straight, West End cinema; not showing, say, a politically controversial film, but a ten-year-old film in praise of hedonism.

But frisked you do get and, if you happen to be carrying bags of flour or plastic squeezy containers, out they go. For this is Saturday night and *The Rocky Horror Show*, a film that's become both a cult and a ritual for young people around the English-speaking world. Go to it in New York and there they are with their rice and their orchestrated shouts. They're at it in Auckland, in London and, no doubt, many other places that have slipped the attention of the Rocky Horror Fan Club: formed in America to focus on this extraordinary, global, spontaneous growth. There was this American, right, said Rosie — a lively, punky 16-year-old — and he'd been warned against going to the show here, right; they don't do *anything* in England, he'd been told. But he'd come and he'd been really impressed that they could do it properly.

This is high praise, for 'doing it properly' is quite a business — a complex mixture of dressing up, of formalised responses and of new bits of creativity which may or may not be accepted by the punters. The dressing-up is on site, with a rush by everyone to the Ladies — the Gents is just too squalid, said 16-year-old Jonathan, one of the kids from Hampstead Comprehensive (the others being Tiffany, Tracey and Joanne) who were my guides and interpreters. In go normalish people (mainly dressed in black, bulky, refugee clothes: girls with bold tumbling locks, less positive blokes); out — in black stockings and suspenders, high heels and tailcoats — come imitation Rocky Horror characters: Rif-Raf and Magenta, Columbia and, on a good day, Frank. There are no Franks that night. It takes nerve, as Jonathan soberly pointed out, to dress up in a corsage, briefs, high heels and little else. As well as being a bit chilly.

But the lights are going down. The Hampstead kids grab the front row. At the back a rival group ('Casuals') bays with excitement as the credits roll. Here it comes again, the arch-spoof of Fifties kitsch, a take-off of second-rate horror movies and hack SF all dressed up in lurid, zappy, rock-laden, piss-taking style. (When it first opened on the stage in London, I remember it being the only show in which critics were given drinks *before* the show rather than in the interval. You can draw your own conclusions.) Here, for beginners, is the story.

Two nice, clean-cut kids, Brad and Janet, break down in their car near a sinister, Gothic pile in the middle of a stormy night. Welcomed in by the weird butler, Rif-Raf, they find the squire, Frank N Stein, has just managed to imbue a body (the gorgeous, muscle-bound Rocky) with life. However, 'life' as lived here makes these two young innocents shudder, for the inhabitants are really people from the fun-loving planet of Transexual Transylvania, where there's nothing much to divide the men from the boys or the girls. So with music, a variety of couplings, a casual slaughter and much mayhem, it moves to its climax — a return to the forbidden planet, and curtains.

You wouldn't get too much of that from a present-day screening. ('Oh dear,' said the couple behind me, who'd clearly come in just to see a film, as the hanky-panky began. 'We're never going to be able to hear the words.') The opening scene, where Brad and Janet meet, takes place at a country wedding — rice rains through the air of the auditorium. 'He's a lucky fellow,' says Brad, as bride and groom depart. 'No he's not,' chants the audience in unison. 'She's got syph.' Off drive the hero and heroine on their ill-fated journey through the storm. Water pistols and unconfiscated squeezy bottles come into action. (The wise have brought newspaper, as Janet does in the film, to cover their heads.) The dimly lit house appears. Candles, matches and sparklers flicker prettily in the auditorium. Inside are signs of hectic activity. 'Are you having a party?' asks Brad innocently. 'No,' shouts the audience, 'it's my brother's bar-mitzvah!' As the party and the rock number 'Let's do the Time Warp' roll, my guides leap up — tail-coated and black-stockinged — onto the ledge at the base of the screen and, like a well-drilled chorus line, join in.

And so it goes on, at a cracking pace: smart-ass comments; anticipations ('Watch the step,' they shout, as Magenta tap dances across the set. She stumbles on the step); missiles ('Let's have a toast,' says Frank; obediently bits of toast fly over your head); participatory dances; manipulations ('What do you like on your cornflakes, Frank?' shouts a wag mystifyingly, as Frank is leaving the room. He turns at the door, looks into the camera and says huskily, 'Come.' The audience cheers.) By the end the audience is spent and the auditorium is shattered — rice, water, playing cards, confetti, toast, flour (disapproved of by the purists).

Three new screens in the past year, muttered the manager at the door as the audience, back in street clothes, streamed past.

A duff night, said the Hampstead kids judiciously, messed up by the Casuals who'd just come to yell and didn't appreciate the rules of the occasion. And there hadn't been anyone really creative in the audience either; new bits of business that get audience applause can eventually get absorbed into the orthodox version. The show grows like a pearl, containing details that are now obscure to audiences even in the States. 'Eddie?' queries a character. 'No,' shouts the audience, 'Penelope!' — a reference to a long-gone American TV duo.

Outside the cinema, the crowd drifts off into the night, leaving traces of flour and confetti on Baker St. What, I wonder, would Holmes have deduced from all this? Tribal ritual? New Barbarism? Performance Art? Participatory cinema (a new art form)? Licensed vandalism? In years to come, theses will doubtless be written on its regimented anarchy. The phenomenon could run and run. □

TELEVISION

Hugo Williams
Scour wars

A SAMPLE PAGE of your morning tabloid will instinctively play off 'Widow's Acid Scars' against 'Cathy's Big Pools Smile' to help bring you a more balanced breakfast time. Child battery, hypothermia and high-street-sniper-massacres (mouth turned down) are offset by Royalty, charity hypes and rigged inflation figures (mouth turned up). Rape cases are mitigated by have-a-go heroes and kinky animal stories, set in bolder type. Newspapers are like an overworked analyst's scribble-pad. It is not the stories. It is the stories between the stories. It is not what is said. It is what is left unsaid.

The same applies to television. After the other morning's news of a casual planeload roaring off to oblivion courtesy of Arrow Airlines, we hear that the best things in life cost a little more, like *Panache* by Lentheric. 'After the News,' promises a perfumed Anne Diamond, 'we talk to another rape victim . . . the wife of rapist Christopher Meah, awarded damages of more than £40,000 following personality changes caused by a car accident.' And lo and behold there is poor Mrs Meah, her long black hair combed out over her shoulders, but nothing to say really beyond, 'I still don't believe it has happened. I'm going to use my maiden name from now on.' The interest, don't you know, is in Mrs Meah's pale face and depression, her spots of rouge and her blouse, her class, her accent and her rings. Mrs Meah couldn't believe anything, but we could, easily, with it sitting there before our eyes. She disappears and we are ordered to buy 'Zoids' from Tomy. What are they, punk house pets or cough suppositories? Neither. They're alarming plastic vehicles that stand on two feet and hurl abuse at you.

'After nine,' chirrups Anne Diamond, her down-pointing mouth almost attempting the horizontal, 'we meet Simon Williams, close personal friend of Joan Collins' (and brother of *New Statesman* TV critic). 'At 52,' Anne bitches, 'the Queen of Bitchcraft is a woman who looks even better as she gets older.' We witness some Fifties Collins tack, then Joan giving us her beauty tips: 'First, think that you are beautiful . . .' She forgets what the other tips are, but she thinks, 'It's important to play the field.' The angle this time is 'Joan's revenge on the Hollywood of the Fifties which could only offer her second best'. Simon — everyone calls him Sam and it's written on his jumper — remembers Joan's incredible bravery after her daughter Katy's road accident, which happened while he was playing opposite her in *The Last of Mrs Cheyney* at Chichester. 'She has a family motto: "When the going gets tough, the tough get going".' Was she perhaps too tough on occasions? wonders Anne. No, she just won't let the hurt show. Fair enough. An excellent performance by my brother. 'Thank you, Simon. And now it's over to the News Room . . .' Stabs and bombs and takeover bruises. ▷

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By now my brother is on his way home to a balanced breakfast. He's good news. He can think standing up or sitting down and his voice is nice. When he does a voice-over for a car-rental firm they tell him: 'Lots of smile in the voice, please Simon,' because they know that cars are piling up on the motorway in the newsflash following their slot. Sam tries to keep it 'punchy but middle-of-the-road', the way they want it, plus lots of smile of course. But there are too many numbers in the copy and he's put off by the jingle. He can see them arguing about something in the booth, but when they talk to him they have a lot of smile in their voice. 'Thank you Simon, love. That's terrific. It's a wrap.'

A week later he's driving home past the crowds of spectators at the latest motorway holocaust, hundreds of cars mounting one another in their eagerness to get home to tellydom and a balanced diet, to be part of that diet even, the bad bit on this occasion, when he hears the jingle for the car rental and pricks up his ears. It isn't him! Whassamatter, not enough smile? Or too much? It sounds more like the floor manager by now. Lovely, Simon. Thanks a million. It's a wrap!

This time he's doing a voice for a bath scourer. The campaign is designed to promote its product by knocking the opposition. He calls it 'Scour Wars'.

A pair of sunglasses is used to show the disastrous effects of cleaning your specs with brand 'X'. 'Huh,' goes Sam aggressively, 'so much for . . .' Undamaged shades, courtesy of the advertised product, are then shown and Sam drives home on the motorway.

A week later he gets a call from the agency asking him to come in for re-dubs. The IBA have found his 'Huh' too prejudicial. 'Hnnh' has been suggested as carrying a more balanced outlook. Sam comes in to record his 'Hnnh'. The men in the booth have a smile in their voice and a new cheque is ready at the desk. Three days later the bad news reaches him. The IBA have found his 'Hnnh' too suggestive of unproven knowledge. Couldn't he sound more open-minded to the claims of the opposing gritty substance? Everyone puts their heads together and comes up with 'Mmm' as the perfect equivocal ejaculation. 'Mmm,' goes my brother, 'so much for . . .' There are smiles in everyone's voice and cheques ready at the desk.

The next call from the IBA is about another part of the ad. altogether. They're of the opinion now that 'Most makers of plastic baths recommend . . .' is making too free with arbitrary statistics and the vagaries of individual manufacturers. Couldn't they . . .? 'Most' is accordingly deleted and the ad. resubmitted. Not surprisingly, the IBA finds its meaning unchanged. How about '*Some* makers'? they ask. Sam gets the call and beetles up to town to dub on a 'Some' in front of 'makers', wondering how long it will be before he is called upon to change that to the logical next step of 'A few', or even 'Few'. But it's a simple job and a cheque is waiting at the desk.

A few weeks later he's watching the wrecks on ITN's Christmas-day death-toll when he happens to see the finished work in full for the first time. His 'Mmm' has disappeared altogether. 'So much for . . .' goes the truncated commercial.

Weekend competition

No 2904 **Set by E. O. Parrott**

Wanted: a battle song for those about to enter the fray at the Great Winter Sales. Max 14 lines by 9 January.

No 2901 **Set by Di Dact**

Summaries of major works of literature.

Report **By Ms de Meaner**

There are occasions — few, very few, but none the less succulent for that — when you pay back in rich and lip-smacking full the efforts we expend on your behalf. This, *meine Kinder,* is one of them: a gargantuan entry with scarcely a dud; with hardly a soul being tempted to scrawl on the back of their last week's shopping list; with almost nobody blithely refusing to grasp what was being requested (or choosing, for reasons best known to themselves,to enter some different competition) and with *not one* dreary complaint about deadlines, money, the setter's use of English. Why, one can't help wondering, as one fans such brilliance out over one's desk and trickles a finger of malt into a tumbler, can't you bloody well do this every week? For *la crème de la crème* below, £12 a head and a copy of E. O. Parrott's esteemed anthology: *How to Become Ridiculously Well Read in One Evening* (Viking). Further copies of the book alone to Noel Petty, Lissa Evans, Gavin Ewart, A. R. Frith, Basil Ransome-Davies and Nigel Bunker — and, to you all, my wish that you survive the impending surfeit of dehydrated bird-flesh, dehydrated self and Family.

Anita Brookner's *Hotel du Lac*

There's this hotel by a lake in Switzerland. It's in the French-speaking part, which is why it's called Hotel du Lac. 'Gasthaus von der See' would be different, somehow. Not a lot happens. There's this woman who's prone to murmuring, 'Oh, David,' and writing descriptions of the other guests at the hotel, which is boring because the author has just described them as well.The woman eventually reveals that she chickened out of marrying someone who wasn't David, and decides to marry a man at this hotel instead. But he isn't David, either, so she decides to go home. No, on the author's second thoughts, she decides to *return.* This book is all about the author's second thoughts.

ALISON PRINCE

Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*

Heathcliff is as deep and dark as
Cathy is a child of light;
Heathcliff clasps her silly carcase
On a dark and stormy night.

The moor, the really not so merrier:
Heathcliff hates his foster-brother.
Cathy? None can really bury her;
On the heights, they're bound to wuther.

Tap-tap on the bedroom shutters,
Lockwood twitters, *what's it mean?*
Lovers? Tragic heroes? Nutters?
Yes and no, says Nelly Dean.

WILL BELLENGER

Saul Bellow's *Herzog*

Dear Claire Rayner,

My problem is that I can't stop writing letters. I write to everyone — alive or dead — see, I'm writing to you. Well you know how it is for a divorced, middle-aged Jewish lecturer living in a crummy old house in Western Massachusetts who is having an affair with an ex-student called Ramona.

I'm worried about my kids from marriages one and two.

I'm worried about whether or not to murder my second wife.

What should I do?

Yours, Moses E. Herzog.

Dear Moses,

Why not invite Ramona to dinner? You could hire a woman called MrsTuttle to tidy up a bit and cook the meal. Then just relax. I think it'll work, lovie.

Yours, Claire Rayner.

V.ERNEST COX

Milton's *Samson Agonistes*

Eyeless, in Gaza, at the mill, with slaves. Damn the woman, betrayed me : *her* fault. Damn the Jews, deserted me: *their* fault. God wrathful, family useless, Philistines philistine. Eyeless, in England, at the Bible, under Charles bloody Stuart. Pull it all down on top of 'em and be damned. Me too. Dammit girl, pay attention: exclamation-mark after 'me too'! Don't you think it's high time you learned how to take dictation? God in heaven, but her mother was exactly the same. Am I never to receive the respect and obedience I deserve in my own house as a major poet etcetera. . . .

JOHN ARDEN

F.Scott Fitzgerald's *Tender is the Night*

An American shrink, name of Dick,
Falls in love with Nicole, who is sick
In the head. But her mind's
Quite OK and she finds
Hers magnetically drawn to his. Dick,

Though regrettably fond of a quick
One (in more ways than one) is the pick
Of his whole generation.
Their disintegration
Ends with Nicole quite cured, but Dick sick.

PETER NORMAN

Franz Kafka's *The Trial*

A bewildered young fellow called K
Who had done nothing wrong — no way —
Came to learn, alas,
That the law is an ass,
But however, it rules. Oh, K!

W. S. BROWNLIE

The Bible

This bloke, Jehovah, makes the world. Next, he makes Adam and — his big mistake — Eve. These two discover sin and wear fig leaves, so he throws them out. Their kids are worse, so he drowns them. Noah's boatload escapes but his kids are no better. Jehovah does a deal with Abraham: 'You do the right thing by me, my boy, and I'll do the right thing by you.' When Abraham's kids do the right thing, they smite Moab; when they don't, Moab smites them. Moab does most of the smiting.

Jehovah sends his son to save them. Jesus is hot on sin too and goes on about loving people, so they top him. I'm not dead, he says, and disappears.

VICTOR SUTCLIFFE

T S. Eliot's *Ash Wednesday*

Although I'm no longer for turning
And I'm vowed to *askesis* and learning,
As I climb up the stair
A soft mouth and blown hair
Still arouse an intractable yearning.

ANN DEUTSCH

E. O. Parrott's *How to Become Ridiculously . . .*

From Austen to Adams, from Wyndham to Wilde,
The literary field is immense,
But Parrott has cut the whole lot down to size
With some help from a few of his friends.

JOHN STANLEY

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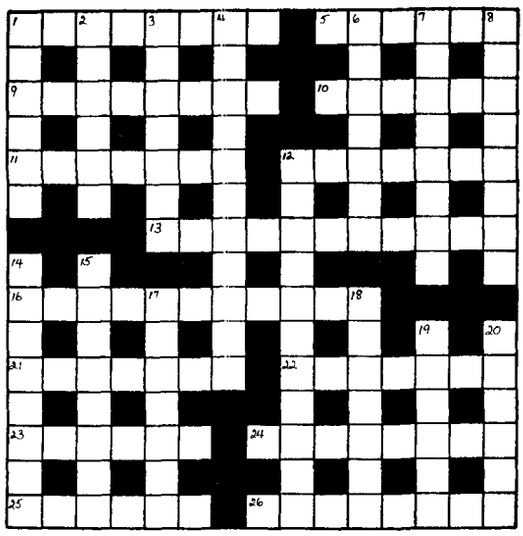
Weekend Crossword 1503

PRIZES: £5 Book Tokens for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Crossword 1503, New Statesman, 14-16 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU by first post 7 January.



Name_____

Address_____

ACROSS

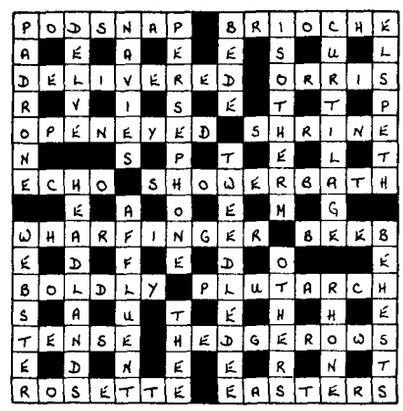
1. Town is place for putting beside river (8)
5. Happened to be iron inside a metal object (6)
9. Prams do a turn as guides (8)
10. Weapons badly missing from main vessel (6)
11. Late but above one's entitlement (7)
12. On the throne so expecting to lose one's head? (7)
13. In the top course, managing to add weight? (11)
16. Resolution which makes one free of speech in a town (11)
21. A fall and there is the conspirator, half dead (7)
22. He makes mischief when a girl is going about with men (7)
23. The bird comes after a note has been returned giving excuses (6)
24. Kind of blaze which would do for Oscar if the tree were removed (8)
25. Brings into operation penniless specialists (6)
26. Courses for beginners (8)

DOWN

1. Monster who requires a novelist to make cheese (6)
2. Overjoyed although the story is returned by the editor (6)
3. No maid unsettled and caught wandering about (7)
4. There is a bit of money on a contest for fine writing (11)
6. Infuriates when an article is found in chopped up greens (7)
7. Lift across the ocean (8)
8. Preparations for babies still found in strange tales (8)
12. Going wild because one is in the athletics nonsense (7, 4)
14. Wise about speed when one can get to the moon (5, 3)
15. Possibly gets ripe in standing (8)
17. Little periodical exists in that thing for a poet (7)
18. One who gives way like youth before one old man (7)
19. I am in the spot for fish (6)
20. Loss of head in crises is annoying (6)

SETSQUARE

Solution to 1501



Prizewinners to 1501

T. Burrows (London SW17)
George Morrison (Dover)
I. Tipton (Borth, Dyfed)

CHESS

A RECORD of achievements to toast may help to induce festive release from the shame of being a citizen of a country such as ours has become and from the painful lunacy of a military programme glamorized by borrowing the name of a popular movie. At least chessplayers can celebrate 1985 as a vintage year. If we are to acclaim only the best in chess, however, we run into the embarrassment of having to clap the head boy as he trots up to receive prize after prize. So, after congratulating Kasparov, we had better exclude his contributions on the grounds of excessive familiarity and superhuman excellence.

There is the parochial issue of the best British player of the year to settle. Not much doubt here. Thanks to his 7-1 trouncing of the US champion Lev Alburt and his progress to the candidates' tournament, Nigel Short heads the list.

Picking the best book of the year is more difficult. In retrospect, the most ironically titled was Karpov's *Learn from Your Defeats* (Batsford), which malicious souls may already have gift-wrapped for return to the author. Tim Harding's assiduous guide *The New Chess Computer Book* (Pergamon) will find a ready market. Yet I have mixed feelings about its function. As an antidote to inflated advertising claims it is a job well done, but it will only be invaluable to those with money to squander on expensive toys. The book I would vote for as the most enjoyable read is Bill Hartston's *The Kings of Chess* (Michael Joseph).

If we are to discount the Big Two, the outstanding player amongst the others is a close contest between Timman and Yusupov. On consideration I think we should give the verdict to Timman. That leaves Yusupov to share in the distinction of having discovered the niftiest way of splitting a point, for the following gamelet from the Tunis interzonal:

Yusupov-Beliavsky, Queen's Gambit Accepted.
1. d4 d5 2. c4 dxc4 3. e4 Nf6 4. e5 Nd5 5. Bxc4 Nb6 6. Bb3 Nc6 7. Nf3 Bg4 8. Ng5 Bxd1 9. Bxf7 + Kd7 10. Be6 + and a draw by perpetual. The bulletin records 23 minutes on the clock for the whole game. I wonder if they rehearsed it? You have to admit, though, it is rather neat.

Timman managed to slip past Tal on tie-break count when their play-off match for the fourth candidates' semi-finals place ended 3-3, with one win apiece. The fact that Tal seems to have missed a win in the final game shows just how close the Dutch GM's successful campaign came to being just another year of disappointment. The debate between Timman and Yusupov for the title of Best of the Rest will be resumed in the new year when they meet in one of the semi-finals (the other is Vaganian v Sokolov). In the meantime Jan is icing 1985 with an exhibition match against Kasparov in Hilversum. Strange to find a world champion as sparring partner for one of his potential challengers!

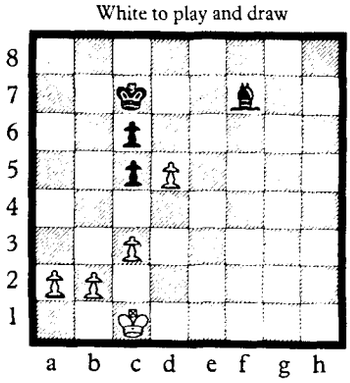
For best game of 1985, given that I am perversely persisting in excluding the Karpov-Kasparov matches and in particular the awesome 16th game of the second match, it would be hard to better the effort that won the brilliancy prize at last month's inaugural World Team Championship.

Ribli (Hungary) — Kouatly (France), Board 2, Round 1, Lucerne 1985. English Opening.
1. Nf3 Nf6 2. c4 c5 3. g3 b6 4. Bg2 Bb7 5. 0-0 g6 6. Nc3 Bg7 7. d4 cxd4 8. Qxd4 Nc6 9. Qf4 Rc8 10. Rd1 d6 11. b3 Ne4 From Kouatly's point of view 11 . . . 0-0 might well have proved more satisfactory, though that would have deprived the rest of us of the treat that follows. **12. Nxe4! Bxal 13. Ba3 Bg7 14. Nfg5 0-0 15. Nxh7! Kxh7** The confusing 15 . . . Nd4!? was probably a better practical chance. **16. Ng5 + Kg8 17. Qh4 Re8 18. Bh3!** A tremendous move with the main threat of 19. Qh7 + Kf8 20. Ne6 + fxe6 21. Bxe6 followed by Qg8 mate. It is amazing how helpless Black's army is: e.g. 18 . . . Ne5 19. Qh7 + Kf8 20. Ne6 + fxe6 21. Bxe6 Nf7 22. Bb2! or 18 . . . e6 19. Rxd6 Qe7 20. Qh7 + Kf8 21. Rd7!. **Kf8 19. Ne6 + Kg8** For if 19 . . . fxe6 20. Bxe6 there is still nothing to be done against Qh7-g8 mate. White now repeats the position, presumably wondering whether he can go ahead with his mating plan with 21. Qh7. In view of the reply 21 . . . e6 he contents himself with taking the Queen. **20. Ng5 Kf8 21. Ne6 + Kg8 22. Nxd8 Rcxd8 23. Bg2 Bf6 24. Qh6 e6 25. h4 d5 26. h5 Bg7 27. Qg5 dxc4 28. Rxd8 Rxd8 29. bxc4 gxh5 30. Bb2 e5 31. Bd5 Rd6 32. Qxh5 Rd7 33. Qf5 1-0.**

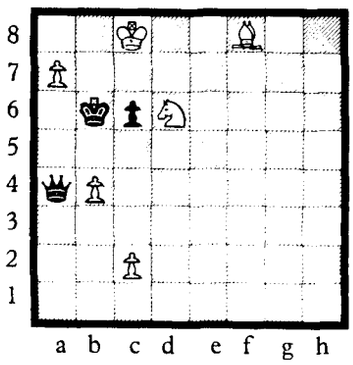
Problems

A duet of studies from 1925 by that master of the art Leonid Kubbel. If you solve them you will spot a common theme. Solutions in our next issue.

A
White to play and draw



B
White to play and win



George Botterill

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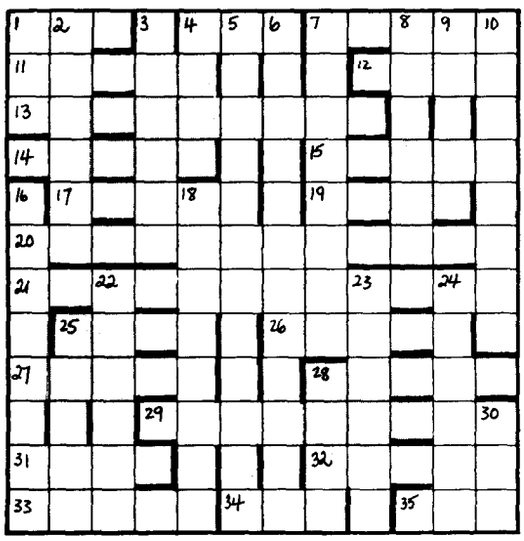
SEASONAL MUSINGS

AFTER ALL THE FUSS YOU MADE ABOUT HAVING TO GO AND SEE FATHER CHRISTMAS, WHAT A WAY TO BEHAVE.
I TOLD YOU HE WAS A PATRIARCHAL PROP OF RAMPANT MATERIALISM
I TOLD YOU HE WAS JUST AN ORDINARY MAN IN A RED DRESSING GOWN AND A COTTON WOOL BEARD
BUT THERE WAS STILL NO NEED TO BITE, KICK AND SCREAM WHEN YOU SAW HIM
SANTA'S GROTTO SECOND FLOOR
IT WAS AFTER HE PUT ME ON HIS LAP AND GAVE ME A PARCEL I REMEMBERED WHAT YOU ALWAYS TOLD ME
SANTA'S GROTTO CONCESSION
NEVER TAKE PRESENTS FROM STRANGERS
BY JANIS GOODMAN

Salamanca 102

'Christmas Box'

PRIZES: £25 cheques for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Salamanca 102, New Statesman, 14-16 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU, by first post 21 January 1986*.



Name_____

Address_____

_____

***The solution and prizewinners to Salamanca 102 will be published on 24 January 1986.**

All clued answers must be entered with none of their letters in the shaded areas of the box. Clues are of four types: N — normal, leading to normal answers; G — gift, in which the line contains the clue as well as its own jumbled answer; W — wrapping, where the entire line is the clue but the jumbled answer has been removed and the gaps closed (example: 'Wired, so rested' (3), answer SAT (wAS Tired)); and S — string, the clue defining a full word, the subsidiary hints leading to the word entered one letter short (despite any repeats), the omitted letters beginning with the downs forming a string of two words which explain what can now be entered in the shaded labels on the box to complete the puzzle.

ACROSS

S1 Here's a country, one most have to study (4)
S4 Show hint of surprise and speak it out: what do *you* say, buddy? (4)
G7 This is substantial and publicly honoured in various counties (5)
W11 Sentimental climber finding this memorial on mounties? (5)
G12 Part of formula (maths) in trig, say (4)
G13 What'll give power to panel-beater in a big way (6)
S14 Coarse sugar: chewing-gum will wrap this (3)
W15 If you want some cool air you clap this (3)
N17 At the lowest level a slab could be fresher (5)
S19 Letter for relief of extremes of pressure? (3)
N20 Bird having short toes etc., hardly straight? (12)
N21 This bird will wait at large, bobbing about, carrying hardly any weight (12)
S25 Refusal by Scots to leave me out of e.g. Will (3)
W26 This pillar may be left when ice massed own hill (5)
G27 Use Roman word for thing (3)
S28 Almost totally high tone for those who will sing (3)
S29 Here's a game server's content for? (7)
W31 When hearth needed scrubbing would he have bent for? (4)
S32 It's all in the mind, courage, spirit, as it *were*? (6)
S33 It's easy turning old when you've wonderful coeur? (6)
S34 With these to change colour ye'd perhaps go amiss (4)
W35 You must so, when asked, if there isn't this (3)

DOWN

S1 One part that is usually showing (4)
G2 It's blue and beautiful when flowing (6)
S3 Got up from the rear in a common expression (5)
S4 A short President, say, currently in session (3)
N5 When one's plunged with great style odd waves will flow (12)
N6 This shop could be Harrods' base? Hey, not so! (12)
G7 How much space might a paragraph — e.g. a flashy one — employ? (2 words, 8)
W8 This and ointment cover wound — joy! (4)
G9 This land is so written in poem or song (3)
N10 Possibly nice, eh, this covering doubly long? (8)
N16 What's wrong with colour around middle of picture makes you frustrated (8)
G18 Finer areas show stuff with which embroidery's decorated (8)
S22 Impart slight modification to large cup in which name's sunk (5)
W23 We lopped some branches so that low down it's shrunk (4)
S24 Like a foolish flight of fancy, one using vehicle with vane but no wings (7)
N25 You have to avail yourself of leaders of Unions, savings and earnings (3) . . .
S28 . . . yours truly, Mrs T.? (3)
G30 Wily sort this description fits perfectly (3)

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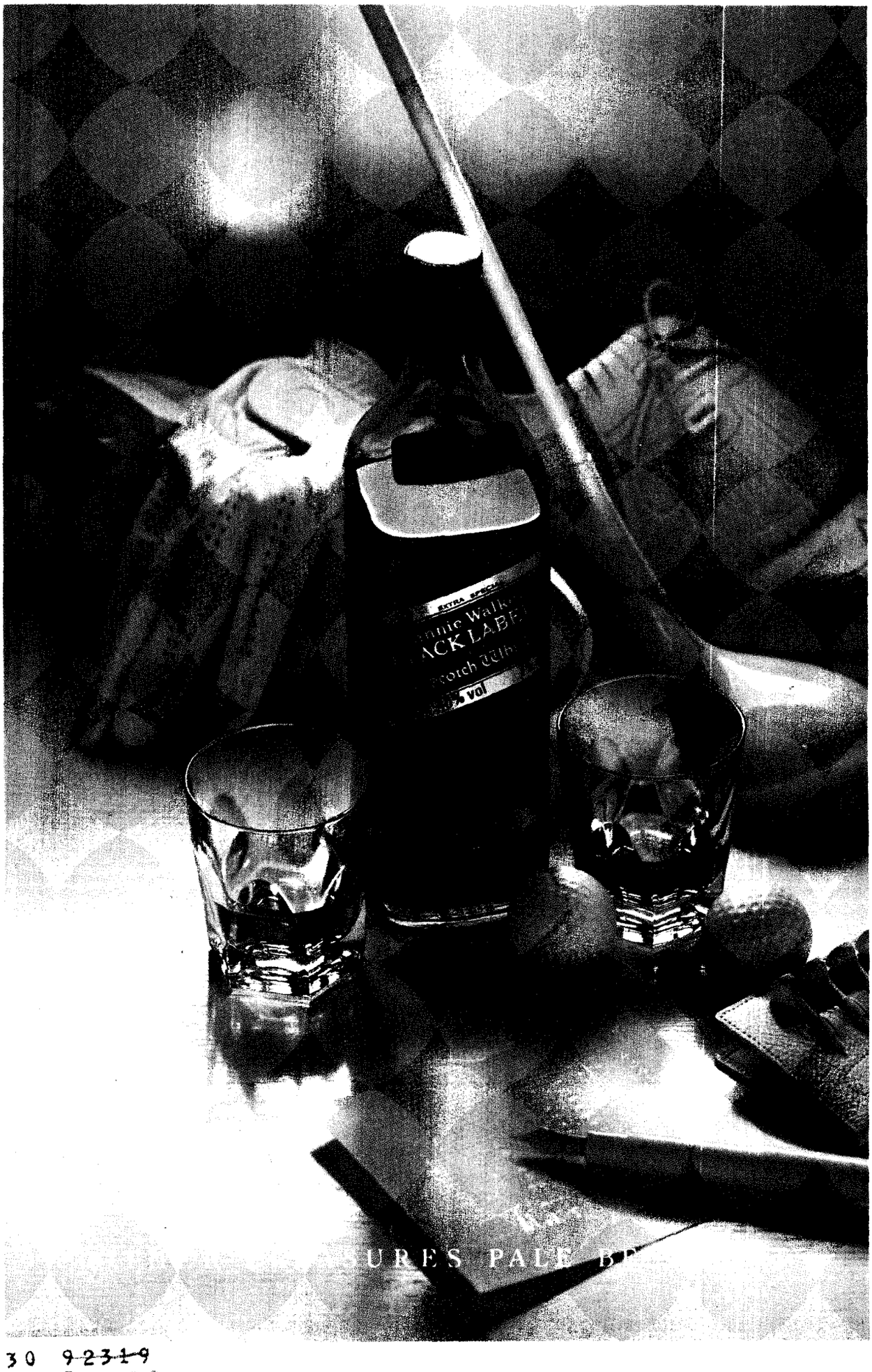

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